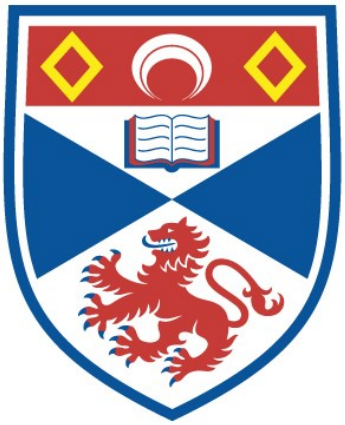
'AS ONE WHO SERVES' - DIAKONIA AS A PARADIGM FOR ORDINATION FOR MINISTRY OF THE WORD AND SACRAMENT IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.): A STUDY IN THE HISTORY OF DOCTRINE

Carlos E. Wilton

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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Carlos E. Wilton

A thesis presented to the Faculty of Divinity
of the University of St. Andrews
in fulfillment of requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

31 March 1994

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I certify that Carlos Eugene Wilton has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution of the University Court, 1967, No 1 (as amended), and is qualified to submit this thesis in application for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

.....
Signature of supervisor

I was admitted as a research student under Ordinance 350 (General No 12) on 1 April 1987 and as a candidate for the Degree of PhD under Resolution of the University Court, 1967, No 1 (as amended) on 1 April 1987.

The following thesis is based o the results of research carried out by myself, is my own composition, and has not previously been presented for a higher degree. The research was carried out in the University of St Andrews under the supervision of Professor D W D Shaw.

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ABSTRACT

"As One Who Serves": Diakonia as a Paradigm
for Ordination to Ministry of the Word and Sacrament
in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.):
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This study is an examination of the institution of ordination to ministry of word and sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), through the lens of the particular biblical-theological paradigm of diakonia, or servanthood.

Chapter titles include:

1) Biblical Roots of Ordination
2) The Evolution of the Threefold Pattern of Ministry
3) Luther and Calvin on Ordination
4) Ordination in the Scottish Reformation
5) The Developing American Understanding of Ordination
6) Recent American Developments
7) A Contemporary Presbyterian Statement on Ordination

This study traces the concept of diakonia as a controlling paradigm for the understanding of ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Following a survey of biblical writings on ordination and ministry, it traces the rise of the "threefold pattern" of bishop, presbyter and deacon through the first three centuries of the church, then explores how the first-generation reformers Luther and Calvin discarded these forms in favor of a radically functional view, informed by the biblical concept of ministry as diakonia. This functional, servanthood model of ministry is traced through the Scottish reformation, to the new world, to recent developments in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The final chapter is an attempt to creatively state the essentials of the Presbyterian understanding of ministry as servanthood.

For Claire, Benjamin and Anna

in grateful appreciation

for their years of support, understanding and patience

CONTENTS

DECLARATIONS

I hereby declare that the following thesis is based on the results of research carried out by myself, that it is my own composition and that it has not previously been presented for any degree. The research was carried out during the years 1987-1994 under the supervision of Professor D.W.D. Shaw.

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INTRODUCTION

In the chancel of a Presbyterian church, a woman kneels, her head bowed. A circle of men and women forms around her, obscuring her for a moment from the view of the gathered congregation. They reach out to touch her: hands on her head, her shoulders -- and, for those at a distance, hands touching the backs or shoulders of those in front.

There is a prayer, and then silence. Hands press gently down on the woman's head, the pressure symbolic of a great weight -- and then release. With joyous acclamation she is pulled to her feet, to handshakes, embraces and the repeated greeting, "Welcome to this ministry!"

It is, of course, an ordination. The young woman rises to her feet a new minister of the word and sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

What has just happened? What is different about her? What remains the same? What has been God's role in the process, and the role of the church? These are some of the questions we will consider in the course of this study.

Ordination has always been troubling to churches of the Reformed tradition in general, and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in particular. Belonging to the Form of Government rather than the Directory for Worship, it can be considered the "black sheep" of the liturgical family. Not a sacrament, it yet conveys to the casual observer a whiff of the sacramental. It has been called an

act of "setting apart," yet it is also a witness to the one ministry of all baptized Christians, the priesthood of all believers. Ordination is the gateway to ministry in a denomination whose ministers are meant to be scholars and thinkers, interpreters of texts and parish theologians -- yet it is a powerful non-verbal experience that defies intellectual analysis.

Ordination has long been the subject of confusion and disagreement within American presbyterianism. As one General Assembly special committee noted in 1966, in withdrawing its report on ordination that had not been warmly received:

> The struggle of the committee to arrive at a clear position on ordination...is representative of the confusion and indecision of the United Presbyterian Church...it [is] abundantly clear that there is no consensus on ordination, on the matter of bearing rule in presbyteries, or on the ordering of mobility within the present diversified ministries.[1]

In this study, we will examine the institution of ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), through the lens of a particular biblical-theological paradigm: that of diakonia, or servanthood. Our study will take us from the pages of the Bible, through the development of the concept of ordination in the early centuries of the church, through the turmoil of the reformation and the establishment and growth of Presbyterian churches in North America -- until the present day, with a detailed examination of the church's most recent theological paper on the subject. The final chapter represents my own attempt

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[1]Report of the Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry, UPCUSA General Assembly Minutes, 1966, Part 1, pp. 195-196.

to creatively restate the Presbyterian understanding of ordination to servant ministry.

Through it all, we will trace the continued track of diakonia as a paradigm for ministry -- sometimes clearly visible, other times all but obscured, but always of central importance to Presbyterians' journey toward the place where God is leading them to engage the world in mission and ministry.

Unless otherwise indicated, English translations of scripture are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). For ease of understanding on the part of non-scholars, Hebrew and Greek words are transliterated into English.

In order that this paper may be easily accessible to the American church, I am following American spelling conventions (although in the case of direct quotations from British authors I have retained the original spelling).

CHAPTER 1: BIBLICAL ROOTS OF ORDINATION

A study of the biblical roots of the doctrine of ordination yields a frustrating lack of evidence. Although one would think that a rite so widespread throughout the Christian church as ordination would have ample biblical precedent, that is not the case. There are suggestive indications of something like ordination as we know it in various sections of scripture, but a thorough study reveals that they are nothing more than indications. The one observation that can be made is that, through all these proto-ordinations, God is utterly sovereign and free, and the chief characteristic of leaders at the moment of commissioning is servantlike submission to the divine call.

In this chapter we will survey the biblical roots for ordination, attempting to construct as much evidence as possible for the rite as it is commonly practiced today. First, we will study incidents in the Old Testament in which leaders are initiated to a task. From there we will go on to catalogue occurrences of the laying on of hands. Turning to the New Testament, we will survey the occurrences of certain words that denote the appointment of leaders, and after that the New Testament incidences of the laying on of hands. With that completed, we will look more generally at the theological concept of <u>diakonia</u> in the New Testament.

ORDINATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There is no account of an ordination as we know it in the Old Testament. There are priests and even high priests, and there are priestly rituals of initiation, but the differences between those ancient rites and modern Christian ordinations are so great as to deflect any attempt to see them as foundational for modern practice.[2]

Yet there are examples of what could be called proto-ordinations. These fall into two principal groups: rites for the initiation of leaders to a particular task and incidents of the laying on of hands. Not all Old Testament initiations of leaders involve the laying on of hands, and not all incidents of the laying on of hands involve the initiation of leaders.

Initiation of Leaders In the Old Testament

The first of these initiations is found in Exodus, chapter 29, when Aaron and his sons are being initiated into the priesthood. By modern standards the rite is peculiar, to say the least. Aaron and his sons are ceremonially washed, then dressed in special

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[2]Besides, as Robert S. Paul points out in Ministry (Philadelphia: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 76ff., we do well to be wary of finding roots of Christian ordination in the priestly ordinations of ancient Israel -- for Jesus never did identify himself as a priest, and in fact had as one his major themes the criticism of the religious professionals of his day. Arnold Ehrhardt, in The Apostolic Ministry, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Paper no. 7 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1958), p. 15, puts it another way when he observes that "Christian and rabbinical ordination stem from the same root, but are independent of each other"; the only similarity between Jewish rabbinical ordination and what was eventually to become Christian ordination, Ehrhardt says, is the laying on of hands (p. 16).

garments. Following that they are anointed with oil. Verse 9 states that once this is done, Aaron and his sons are (as the NRSV translates it) "ordained."

The Hebrew word used here is maleh. Literally, this is related to the word for "fullness," or "that which fills."[3] In other words, as Aaron and his sons go through this rite, they are made complete; their divine call is fulfilled.

Yet the rite does not end with the anointing. An elaborate purification ritual follows. Aaron and his sons lay hands on the head of a bull, which is then killed in ritual fashion. Elaborate instructions follow for the disposal of blood and various body parts. Then the new priests lay hands on two rams, which are also killed. Blood from the first ram is daubed on the right ear, right thumbs and right toes of Aaron and his sons, and sprinkled on their garments to make the wearers holy.

The second ram is called the "ram of ordination."[4] Its breast is "elevated" to Yahweh, then is given to Aaron and his sons as their portion.[5] The whole ram is boiled and eaten by Aaron and his sons. This feast is limited to the new priests:

> They themselves shall eat the food by which atonement is made, to ordain (maleh) and consecrate (qodesh) them, but no one else shall eat of them, because they are holy (v.

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[3]Brown, Francis, et. al., ed. A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953, p. 571.

[4]Ex. 29:22. The Hebrew word here again is maleh.

[5]Ex. 29:26-28.

33).[6]

It is significant that the consecration of the Aaronic high priest does not take place through the act of laying hands on the high priest himself. Hands are laid, rather, on the sacrificial animals, to prepare them for sacrifice. It is the daubing and sprinkling of blood, and the eating of the sanctified meat, that are the parts of the consecration ceremony directed to Aaron and his sons. Although there are some superficial similarities between the Aaronic priestly rite of initiation and Christian ordination, the differences -- particularly the associations with atonement -- are so significant that it is all but impossible to detect a linkage between the two.

Numbers chapter 3 contains a description of the setting-apart (qodesh) of the Levites for service. The book tells how Yahweh takes the Levites to be his own, rather than taking every firstborn son of Israel, as Yahweh would have been entitled to do (3:11-13). This Levitical priesthood is always to be subservient to the Aaronic priesthood (v. 9).

Chapter 8 relates how the setting-apart takes place (8:10-12). Yahweh instructs Moses to present the Levites to the people, after the Levites have been cleaned, shaven and specially dressed. The people lay hands on the Levites; then the Levites are symbolically presented to Yahweh. The Levites then lay hands on the heads of bulls, which are subsequently sacrificed to make atonement on

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[6]Qodesh literally means "to set apart," and is commonly used in the Old Testament to refer to the act of making someone or something holy.

behalf of the Levites.

The Levites are to be "separated" (badal) from the people (v. 14). Their particular task is "to do the service for the Israelites at the tent of meeting, and to make atonement for the Israelites, in order that there may be no plague among the Israelites for coming too close to the sanctuary" (v. 19).

Later in Numbers, the work of constituting the leadership of Israel continues with the setting-apart of elders. Moses finds himself spread too thin administratively, so Yahweh instructs him to select seventy elders of Israel to help him bear the burden of leadership. Yahweh tells Moses, "I will take some of the spirit that is on you and put it on them; and they shall bear the burden of the people along with you..." (11:17). Then Yahweh descends in a cloud upon Moses and the seventy, and transfers Moses' "spirit" in just that way. Having received this spiritual gift, the elders prophesy -- but having done so, the author tells us, "they did not do so again" (v. 25).

Interestingly, the experience is not limited to the formal gathering of elders in Moses' presence. Two elders, Eldad and Medad, have not gone with the larger group to be set apart, but have remained in the camp. They, too, are overcome with the spirit of Yahweh, and prophesy. Joshua urges Moses to forbid this unauthorized prophecy, but Moses will have none of his protegé's objections. He is reluctant to restrict Yahweh's sphere of activity: "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all Yahweh's people were prophets, and that Yahweh would put his spirit on

them!" (v. 29). Moses is more concerned with enabling the function of prophecy to continue than he is with establishing an institutional office.

The First Book of Samuel relates the first significant incident of the anointing of a leader.[7] In this account, Yahweh reveals to the prophet Samuel that he will raise up a Benjaminite named Saul, whom Samuel is to anoint as king (9:16). Samuel does so, pouring a vial of oil over Saul's head (10:1). Samuel announces to the new king, "The spirit of Yahweh will possess you, and you will be in a prophetic frenzy along with them and be turned into a different person" (10:6). Saul goes off, and it happens just as Samuel predicts. Those who knew Saul beforehand ask, with a note of irony, "What has come over the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?" (v. 12). As with Moses' setting-apart of the elders, the rite of anointing is a transforming experience.

It remains to observe one final proto-ordination event, before turning our attention to Old Testament occurrences of the laying on of hands. The call of Jeremiah is an inner spiritual experience rather than a public rite, but it is important to our study for theological reasons. Here, too, we see Yahweh "consecrating" a person for special service: "...before you were born I consecrated [qodesh] you" (1:5b). The seminal insight here is that the act of consecration in Yahweh's alone, and that it occurs independently of any human rite. In Jeremiah's case, the consecration happens

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[7]Although ordination and anointing are not the same, strictly speaking, incidents of anointing are of interest to us because, like modern ordination, anointing is a setting-apart ritual.

before birth -- demonstrating without question that it depends upon no human initiative.

The Laying On of Hands in the Old Testament

Some of the proto-ordination events we have surveyed above involve the laying on of hands, either by one prophetically gifted person or by the people as a whole. Others involve anointing, which is similar to the laying on of hands (at least in that it presumably involves a touch of the hands on the recipient's head, although with the medium of oil added).

Yet the laying on of hands in the Old Testament is not limited to the initiation of leaders. It is useful to survey these other contexts, in order to demonstrate how varied the practice is throughout the Hebrew scriptures; there is little consistency of application.

It will be useful to divide these occurrences of the laying on of hands into five categories: (1) blessing, (2) cursing, (3) atonement, (4) commissioning and (5) the laying on of hands by God or an angel.

First, there is the laying on of hands in blessing.[8] There are many instances of this, but perhaps the best-known is an incident connected with the patriarchal period: that of the aged Jacob blessing his sons Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen. 48:14-15).

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[8]The usual words for the laying on of hands in blessing are sim and shith, "to place one's hands. See Eduard Lohse's article on cheir in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Rudolf Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), vol. IX, p. 428.

The laying on of hands can be used in cursing. Leviticus 24:14 is an example. Speaking through Moses, Yahweh instructs the people what they are to do with a blasphemer: they are to take the perpetrator outside the camp, lay hands on the offender's head, and then stone the person to death.

Closely linked to cursing is the laying on of hands in atonement. Leviticus 4:4 relates how priests of Israel could atone for their sins by laying hands on the head of a bull (presumably by transferring the sins to the bull). The bull was then sacrificed to Yahweh as a sin-offering.[9] Leviticus 16:20-21 is similar: in the great day of atonement ritual, the priests lay hands on an animal's head. This time, however, it is a goat, and the atonement ritual is conducted on behalf of the whole people of Israel. The goat (the "scapegoat") is then driven into the wilderness.

The laying on of hands in commissioning is the usage that has the greatest affinity with the rite of ordination as we know it.[10] We have already seen one incident of this: the people laying hands on the Levites, to commission them as priests (Numbers 8:10-12). Following this is another incident of the laying on of hands in

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[9]The ordination of the Aaronic high priest that we have already considered (Ex. 29) also contains an element of cursing/atonement. In the process of atoning for the sins of the people, Aaron and his sons lay hands on a bull, which is then slain. Atonement is therefore accomplished through the ritual cursing of the bull.

[10]Most often, the word used for the laying on of hands in commissioning is samakh, "to lean one's hands upon someone or something." This is the verb used in descriptions of the laying on of hands as a cultic rite, and in Moses' commissioning of Joshua. See Eduard Lohse's article on cheir in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, p. 428.

atonement, as the newly commissioned Levites lay hands on a bull, to atone for their own sins.

Perhaps the most important Old Testament incident of the laying on of hands in commissioning, from our standpoint, is Numbers 27:22-23: Moses' laying hands on Joshua to publicly commission him leader of the people. The biblical description of the event makes it clear that, in so doing, Moses is investing Joshua with a portion of his own authority. This same commissioning is later recalled in Deuteronomy 34:9, in which the laying on of hands is connected not only with a transfer of authority to Joshua, but with the imparting of wisdom.

Finally, there are some instances in the Old Testament in which the anthropomorphically-pictured God or an angel can lay on hands. The accounts of God's calling two of the greatest prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah, both involve a tactile experience. Jeremiah speaks of God touching him with his hand (1:9), and Isaiah tells how, in his vision, the seraph -- acting as an agent of God -- touches his mouth with a hot coal. While the latter incident does not involve hands in direct contact, it is an image involving touch nonetheless, and it is connected with the start of a leader's ministry.

Summary: Old-Testament Roots of Ordination

Let us now summarize some theological aspects of ordination in the Old Testament.[11]

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[11]I am using the term "ordination" very loosely here, for it is difficult indeed to draw clear parallels between the proto-ordinations of the Old Testament and subsequent practices of the

First, ordination is the human fulfillment of God's prior action. We saw this in the Hebrew word maleh, used to describe the "ordination" of the high priest (Ex. 29:9), which is etymologically linked to "filling" or "fulfillment," and also in God's calling Jeremiah before his birth, when human initiative would have been impossible (Jer. 1:5b). In the calling and setting-apart of leaders, God is the initiator. The human rite which follows is merely a recognition of the decisive call that has already taken place.

Second, ordination represents the separation or setting-apart of a leader from the people. The leader is treated differently after the rite than before. The operative Hebrew word is badal (Num. 8:14).

Third, ordination is a vehicle for the imparting of spiritual gifts. Whether it is through the laying on of hands or the descent of Yahweh in a cloud (Num. 11:25), the setting-apart of leaders also includes the imparting of spiritual power to the leaders.

Fourth, although there are distinct offices of spiritual leadership in the Old Testament (high priests, priests, Levites, elders), the function of leadership is generally seen as more important than office as such.[12] When Moses finds the burdens of leadership too onerous, Yahweh transfers some of Moses' leadership function to the elders (Num. 11:17); and when the elders Eldad and

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Christian church.

[12]This is not necessarily true for the Priestly redactor, for whom the role of the high priest is particularly important (most notably in the ritual of atonement).

Medad who were not present for the divine blessing are subsequently found prophesying outside the camp, Moses refuses to censure them (Num. 11:29). When "there was no king in Israel [and] all the people did what was right in their own eyes" (Judges 21:25), God raises up a king through Samuel's anointing of Saul, so the leadership function may be preserved.

Fifth, the experience of being set apart by God leads to transformation of the leader. When Moses comes down from the mountain, his face shines (Ex. 34:35); when Saul is set apart by Samuel, he is "turned into a different person" (1 Sam. 10:6). This transformation is further seen in the many instances in the Old Testament when, after an encounter with the divine, the set-apart leader takes a new name (Gen. 32:28).

The sheer variety of purposes connected with the laying on of hands in the Old Testament suggests that there was no single, generally agreed-upon rite of ordination or commissioning among the people of Israel.[13] With the rite being used in scripture for everything from blessing to atonement to cursing, it would seem that the only observation we can make is that it is a widely used rite of power.[14] Sometimes that power is exercised individually (as with Moses commissioning Joshua); at other times it is carried

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[13]Moses, in fact, argues against an exclusive rite of commissioning, as we have seen in Num. 11:29, the Eldad and Medad incident.

[14]The use of a hand is especially significant in light of the fact that, in the Old Testament, God's hand is generally seen as symbolic of God's power (Ex. 15:6 and elsewhere). For more on this, see Marjorie Warkentin, Ordination (Philadelphia: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 111.

out by the people as a whole (as in the commissioning of Levites or the cursing of blasphemers). Yet whenever it occurs, there is a strong sense that in the laying on of hands God is powerfully active, working to accomplish the divine purpose through the individuals or the gathered community who have been called.

ORDINATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When we turn to proto-ordination incidents in the New Testament, we find a rite that looks more familiar, but which is still far removed from the rite of ordination as we know it. The only exceptions to this observation are the ordination incidents that belong to the latest stratum of the New Testament documents, the pastoral epistles. These incidents bear some resemblance to the modern concept of ordination, although there are still considerable dissimilarities.

In our study of the New Testament materials, we will first look at certain appointment-words that occur repeatedly, then at occurrences of the laying on of hands. Following these word-studies, we will move into a study of the different forms of ministry that are present in the New Testament, working from the earliest documents to the most recent. Finally, we will introduce diakonia as a signal concept in New Testament theology, and as the controlling paradigm for a contemporary Reformed theology of ordination.

Appointment-Words in the New Testament

The first word to be considered is kathistemi, which is variously defined in English translations as "appoint," "put in charge" or "make." It occurs twenty-two times in the New Testament.

In two of Jesus' parables, it is used to describe the appointment of a servant to a particular task. The first of these is Matthew 24:45-51, the parable of the faithful and wise servant, whom the master "has put in charge over" the household and whom he subsequently puts in charge over all his possessions.[15] The second is Matthew 25:21ff., the parable of the talents. The master puts the two faithful servants in this parable "in charge of many things."

Luke records Jesus using the word as he asks, "Who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?" (12:14). Similarly, in Acts 7:10 Stephen speaks of Joseph, whom Pharaoh "appointed" ruler over Egypt. Shortly after, he speaks of Moses, with whom a disaffected Israelite contended, asking (in a question similar to Jesus' question in Luke 12), "Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?" (7:27ff).[16]

The word is also used to describe a more cosmic sort of appointment. Romans 5:19 speaks of the placing of human beings in a position of either sin or righteousness: "For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience many will be made righteous." Hebrews 2:7 quotes the

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[15]Luke 12:42-48 is a parallel.

[16]See Exodus 2:14.

Septuagint version of Psalm 8: "You have made them for a little while lower than the angels."

In all these cases, kathistemi is a generic appointment-word, used for everything from the appointment of a servant to household duty to the appointment of humanity to a cosmic status before God. The other New Testament occurrences of the word, however, all have to do with some kind of ecclesiastical service.

With one exception, all these are from the letter to the Hebrews, and refer to the high priests of Israel. In Hebrews 5:1, the author describes how God puts high priests "in charge of the things pertaining to God on [mortals'] behalf." Shortly after, we hear how Christ, in humility, did not seek high priesthood for himself, but was "appointed" to it by God (5:5). In 7:28, the word is used to describe how the law "appoints" high priests who are subject to human weakness.[17]

In only one case does the word kathistemi refer to an appointment to anything resembling an ecclesiastical office. That is Titus 1:5-9, a passage dealing with the appointment of elders: "I left you in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you." Since the word is used in so many other places, in a generic sense, to mean "appointing" or "setting over,"

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[17]Hebrews 7:28. It is interesting that the same sentence relates how "the word of the oath, which came after the law, perfects (teteleiomenon) the son forever. The word kathistemi is not used of Jesus (even though the NRSV inserts the word "appoints" here), implying a status for him that is fundamentally different from that of the high priests, who are seen as having been appointed in order to accommodate human weakness.

the NRSV quite correctly translates it "appoint" rather than "ordain." Although kathistemi is the most frequently-used appointment-word in the New Testament, it cannot properly be defined as meaning "ordination."

Another New Testament appointment-word is tasso, a word often translated "to place or station," "to put over or in charge" or "to appoint." This word occurs eight times in the New Testament.

The occurrence in Matthew 28:16 reflects no sense of office at all; it refers to the risen Christ's "directing" the disciples to the mountain where they will receive the great commission. In Luke 7:8 the word is used by a centurion, who describes himself as a man "set under" authority.

Half the New Testament occurrences of tasso are in the book of Acts. The first of these is particularly interesting: Acts 13:48 reads, "...and as many as had been destined to eternal life believed." Here there is a sense of universal appointment or ordination to eternal life, for all those for whom God wills salvation. In Acts 15:2 we see the word referring to delegation to a particular task. In the midst of a dispute over the importance of circumcision, Paul and Barnabas and some others are "appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders." Acts 22:10 has a similar sense: God instructs Saul of Tarsus, who has just been struck blind, to journey to Damascus, where he will be told "everything that has been assigned for [him] to do." Finally, Acts 28:23 does not refer to the appointment of a person at all, but to the "setting" of a day for

Paul to speak.

The remaining two occurrences of tasso are in the letters of Paul. The first is Paul's well-known advice to the Romans, that they be subject to the governing authorities; these authorities, Paul says, "have been instituted by God" (13:1). The final occurrence is 1 Corinthians 16:15, in which Paul relates how the members of the household of Stephanas have "devoted themselves to the service of the saints."

The same conclusion can be drawn regarding tasso as regarding kathistemi: it is a generic term for appointment, with no particular sense of ecclesiastical office attached to it.

The next word to consider is tithemi. Since this word, meaning "to put," is a very common one, we will consider only those particular situations in which it has the sense of appointment.

In John 15:6, Jesus says to the disciples, "You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit..." The sense of appointment here is universal, applying to all of Christian discipleship and not simply to a particular office or task. In 1 Timothy 2:7, the author writes to his protegé, "For this I was appointed a herald and apostle...a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth." It is not entirely clear whether the author is describing particular ecclesiastical offices here (apostle, herald, teacher), or simply tasks that need to be done in the church. Since the very ordinary word tithemi is used, however, it would seem that this, too, is an instance of generic use.

By far the most arresting occurrence of tithemi in the context

of appointment is Acts 6:1-6. Here we have, for the first time in the New Testament narrative, an actual rite resembling ordination. Responding to the urgent need of the Christian community for someone to oversee the financial support of widows, the twelve "call together the whole community of the disciples" and ask them to choose "seven men of good standing whom we may appoint to this task" (v. 3). This is done; and verse six reads, "They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them."

The question is whether or not tithemi in this instance ought to be translated generically (as "appoint") or specifically (as "ordain"). The rite practiced here certainly resembles ordination, particularly the ordination of officers in Presbyterian churches; indeed it is the foundational passage for the modern Presbyterian understanding of the office of deacon. Yet there are several good reasons why we ought to be wary of heralding this incident as the first ordination.

First, there is the ad hoc nature of the occasion. There is a need; the community considers how to meet it; and the community calls out seven men to do so. The gathered church then equips these men for their task through prayer and the laying on of hands. There is no sense in the narrative that the community intends to establish a formal ecclesiastical office -- only to meet a need for the foreseeable future.

Second, there is the word used. Tithemi, as we have seen, is one of the most common verbs in the New Testament. If a more

specific rite had been intended, another word could have been used (either kathistemi or tasso would have more effectively borne this more specific sense). Third, there is the fact that the laying on of hands was widely practiced throughout scripture, in a variety of contexts. It is not used exclusively as an ordination rite.[18]

In Acts 6, then, tithemi is properly translated "appoint" rather than "ordain." This is consistent with the usage of this very common verb elsewhere in the New Testament. We will have to look elsewhere for a Greek word that is able to bear the weight of our modern understanding of ordination.

There are only three remaining alternatives, none of them very promising. The first is poieo, the verb "to do" that is even more common than tithemi. Only one occurrence of this word is significant for our purposes: Mark 3:14, in which Jesus "appoints" the twelve to preach and to have authority to cast out demons. The single occurrence of this word in an appointment context, coupled with its very common nature, makes it difficult to assert that Jesus was in any sense installing disciples in an office.

The second alternative is horizo, a verb commonly translated "to determine or set." The word occurs eight times in the New Testament, but only three of these occurrences refer to the appointment of people to specific roles. In all three instances, Jesus Christ is the one appointed. In Acts 10:42, Peter is preaching about Jesus: "...he is the one ordained by God as judge

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[18]We have already seen the variety of uses for the laying on of hands in the Old Testament; we will survey the New Testament usages shortly.

of the living and the dead." Jesus is also the appointee in Acts 17:31, this time in a sermon of Paul: "...[God] has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed..." The third occurrence is in the prologue to the letter to the Romans: "...the gospel concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be son of God with power..." (1:3-4). It would seem that since the only person "ordained," "appointed" or "declared" is Jesus Christ, it is all but impossible to see horizo as applicable to ordination to church office.[19]

The third alternative is the most likely word to bear the weight of our modern concept of ordination: cheirotoneo. It is derived from cheir, or "hand," and occurs only twice in the New Testament.

The first occurrence is Acts 14:23, an account of the ministry of Paul and Barnabas in Galatia: "And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe." The second is 2 Corinthians 8:18-19, referring to an anonymous man travelling with Titus: "With him we are sending the brother who is famous among all the churches for his proclaiming the good news; and not only that, but he has been appointed by the churches to

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[19]The verb prohorizo ("to predestine") is related to horizo; but that word does not appear any more likely as a candidate for interpretation as ordination to church office. Two of the six occurrences of the word (Acts 4:28, 1 Cor. 2:7) refer to the foreordination of events; the other four (Rom. 8:29,30; Eph. 1:5,11) to the predestination of the whole body of the elect.

travel with us..."

Rather than being related to the laying on of hands, cheirotoneo is related to election or appointment by the raising of hands.[20] For this reason, it is unlikely that this word means anything beyond election or appointment to a task. A further piece of evidence against associating cheirotoneo with ordination (in the modern sense, anyway) is the omission in the Acts 14:23 passage of any mention of the laying on of hands; only prayer and fasting are identified as accompanying the appointment of elders. What cheirotoneo may in fact tell us is not the method of installation but the method of election: by popular vote (the raising of hands).

The great variety of words used in the New Testament to describe installation or appointment to office suggests only one conclusion: there is no indisputable concept of ordination in the New Testament. In the years in which the New Testament books were being written, the church as an organization was highly malleable; such niceties as a theology of ordination and office had not yet been formulated.[21]

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[20]Bauer, Walter. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 889.

[21]The commentary on the report of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.'s Special Committee on the Theology of the Call, Model for Ministry (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1970), p. 25, suggests that the words kathistemi and cheirotoneo are "action words, verbs which describe what was done. It was when these expressions began to be translated by the Latin ordinare, that the whole closed, legalistic system of Roman law with its recognition of static status was superimposed on the flexible, open-ended Biblical meanings. One could then speak of a priestly or ministerial ordo, a notion entirely absent from the New Testament."

This does not mean, however, that there is no New Testament foundation for ordination. Many of the passages we have surveyed suggest certain principles for the ordering of church leadership, principles that ought to inform the contemporary church as it seeks to raise up and equip leaders through a rite of ordination. We will consider some of these theological principles later in this paper, following a survey of the New Testament occurrences of the laying on of hands.

The Laying On of Hands in the New Testament

We have seen in our survey of Old Testament occurrences of the laying on of hands that there is no single purpose for the practice: it is alternately a means of blessing, cursing, atonement or commissioning. The only generalization that may be drawn concerning the laying on of hands in the Old Testament is that it is a rite of spiritual power.

The New Testament is similar to the Old in its diversity: although, as we will see, the later books of the New Testament show signs of a growing identification of the laying on of hands with commissioning for particular service.

We will divide the New Testament occurrences of the laying on of hands into five categories: (1) healing, (2) blessing, (3) imparting the Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts, (4) commissioning and (5) arrest. Following this we will consider two passages that do not readily fit any category.

The most frequent mention of the laying on of hands in the New

Testament has to do with healing.[22] It is not necessary to dwell on these passages, other than to point out that the most common use of the laying on of hands in the New Testament is for this purpose, which is other than that of commissioning leaders. It is also worthwhile to note that there is tremendous diversity of practice in the New Testament accounts of healing by the laying on of hands; there does not appear to be a single rite or method in common use.

There is one occurrence in the New Testament of the laying on of hands in blessing. This is found in Matthew 19:13-15, in which children are brought to Jesus so he may lay hands on them and pray.[23] Given the numerous Old Testament occurrences of the laying on of hands in blessing, it is curious that this is the only New Testament report of the practice.

The New Testament contains several reports of the laying on of

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[22]These passages, with their parallels, are as follows: the healing of a leper, Matt. 8:3 (parallels Mark 1:41, Luke 5:13); the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, Matt. 8:15 (parallel Mark 1:31); the healing of Jairus' daughter, Matt. 9:18 (parallel 5:23); Jesus' only action in Nazareth is that "he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them" (Mark 6:5); Jesus heals a deaf-mute by "laying his hand upon him," as well as other actions (Mark 7:32); Jesus heals a blind man by laying hands on him twice (Mark 8:23-25); Jesus heals an epileptic boy by exorcising a demon, then taking him by the hand to lift him up (Mark 9:27); a passage from the "long ending" of Mark, listing the laying on of hands in healing as one of the signs that followers of the risen Lord will demonstrate (Mark 16:18); Jesus lays hands on sick people in Capernaum (Luke 4:40); Jesus lays hands on a woman who cannot stand straight (Luke 13:13); Peter heals the lame man by the Beautiful Gate by reaching out a hand to him (Acts 3:7); Ananias heals Saul of Tarsus of blindness by laying hands on him -- by this act also imparting the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:10-19); Paul heals the father of Publius through prayer and the laying on of hands (Acts 28:8).

[23]One parallel is Mark 10:13. The other parallel, Luke 18:15, does not mention the laying on of hands specifically; this version says simply, "that he might touch them."

hands in order to impart the Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts.

The first of these, Acts 8:14-24, is also one of the most significant. This passage is worthy of particular note because it bears witness to the gravity with which the community of Acts approaches the laying on of hands. The passage is the account of the magician Simon's attempt to purchase the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter and John's act of imparting the Spirit, which Simon had witnessed (and the secret of which he tried to buy), involved prayer and the laying on of hands.[24]

The incident of Simon the magician is not concerned with initiation to office, but with the imparting of spiritual power. Peter and John bear a commission from the apostles at Jerusalem to complete a stated task (the imparting of the spirit to the Samaritan believers), but there is no evidence that either the apostles or the Samaritan Christians hold any particular ecclesiastical office. Any association of this passage with ordination by laying on of hands is a later interpretation on the part of the church.

Acts 9:10-19 is the account of Ananias' healing of the blind Saul of Tarsus. While this is on one level a healing, it is also an account of the imparting of the Holy Spirit, so it deserves our attention under this heading as well. As Ananias lays hands on Saul, he tells him there are two purposes for his act: "that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit" (v. 17).

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[24]This passage, of course, provides the origin of the term "simony," the ecclesiastical offense of attempting to purchase church offices.

In Acts 19:1-7, Paul visits Ephesus, discovering in that city a group of twelve believers who have received the baptism of John the Baptist. Paul baptizes them in the name of Christ, accompanying the baptism with the laying on of hands. To this there is a response of spiritual power: "When Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied" (v. 6).

The next occurrence of the transmission of spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands is a passage that is often interpreted as pertaining to ordination to office. Yet despite this traditional interpretation, the text of 1 Timothy 4:14 does not explicitly mention the laying on of hands in conjunction with ordination. The verse -- which is imbedded in a section of miscellaneous exhortations to diligence in spiritual leadership -- reads, "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders." It is not clear whether this laying on of hands is part of a rite of ordination to office, or whether it is given to Timothy in another context, such as commissioning for a particular, limited task. It is also possible that the laying on of hands recalled in this passage is part of a baptismal ceremony (as in the Acts passages we have just considered). If this is true, it would mean that Timothy's "ordination" is nothing more than the universal ordination to service that belongs to all baptized Christians.

A similar lack of clarity pertains to 2 Timothy 1:6, which likewise hearkens back to an earlier experience of the laying on of

hands: "Hence I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands..." As in the 1 Timothy passage, it is not clear whether this earlier laying on of hands by the author is associated with Timothy's assumption of a particular office. It is entirely possible that the historic association of this passage with the full-blown rite of ordination is the work of the later church, sleuthing in the pastoral epistles for signs of its own subsequently-developed practice. At the very least, however, we can say with certainty that both passages recognize the laying on of hands as a means of imparting spiritual gifts.

There are just two New Testament passages that associate the laying on hands with the commissioning of a person to a particular task. The first of these is Acts 6:1-6, in which the apostles pray and lay hands on the seven men they have selected to fulfill the diaconal ministry of caring for the community's widows.[25] The second, Acts 13:1-3, tells how the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch lay hands on Barnabas and Saul. This is at the express direction of the Holy Spirit, who tells the church leaders, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." The laying on of hands is preceded by fasting and prayer, and followed by the sending-out of the two missionaries.

In both these instances, there is a sense in which the spiritual gift that accompanies the laying on of hands will be

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[25]We have previously considered this passage as one containing the appointment-word tithemi (see above).

retained by the recipients for some time, if not for the rest of their lives. It is, therefore, a theoretically unlimited gift -- although it is clearly given for the initial purpose of aiding a particular work. Missing from both these passages, however, is any indication that the recipient of the laying on of hands thereby becomes an ecclesiastical officeholder. The focus is on equipping for a function, rather than investing for an office.

The remaining category of laying-on-of-hands passages is those dealing with arrest.[26] Since these are clearly not connected with ordination in any respect, there is no need to consider them further -- other than to observe that the first-century church had not, apparently, so definitively identified the phrase "laying on of hands" with church office as to rule out other, more mundane meanings.

It remains to consider two other incidents of the laying on of hands which do not fit easily into the above categories. In both cases, this is because the particular function of the practice is unclear.

The first of these ambiguous passages is 1 Timothy 5:22, which is located in the midst of a collection of miscellaneous instructions for elders. After some advice on ecclesiastical discipline, the author writes, "Do not ordain anyone hastily, and do not participate in the sins of others; keep yourself pure." The literal meaning of the Greek, however, is "Do not lay hands on

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[26]These are Matt. 26:50 (and its parallel, Mark 14:46), Luke 20:19, Luke 21:12, John 7:30, Acts 4:3, Acts 5:18 and Acts 21:27.

anyone hastily..."[27] Although the passage has often been interpreted as having to do with ordination, there is no indication from the context that this is the case.[28]

The second ambiguous passage is Hebrews 6:2. This is only a passing reference to the laying on of hands, part of a list of basic items of Christian knowledge on which the author promises not to dwell.[29] For that reason, the passage tells us nothing of the particular function of the laying on of hands in that church -- although it does suggest that the rite was important, and perhaps controversial in some sense also.

Our survey of the laying on of hands in the New Testament, then, reveals a range of circumstances and customs so diverse that it is difficult to identify the practice with investiture to office in any particular sense.

Ministry in the Teachings of Jesus

Having seen the variety of meanings associated with the

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[27]The translators of the NRSV have chosen to use the word "ordain" in this passage, and to note the literal meaning, "Do not lay hands on" in a footnote. The earlier RSV translators had rendered the passage, "Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands." The RSV is to be preferred at this point, because it is extremely tenuous to infer, from this brief sentence in the midst of a miscellaneous list of instructions, that the author means to speak of ordination in anything resembling a modern sense.

[28]See 1 Tim. 4:14, which we have previously considered as an example of the laying on of hands to impart the Holy Spirit. Neither passage makes an explicit connection between the laying on of hands and ordination.

[29]The others are baptisms, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.

concepts of appointment and the laying on of hands in the New Testament church, we will now widen our field of vision to survey the specific forms of ministry that are present, or at least suggested, in the New Testament.[30]

Our survey begins with the earliest stratum of tradition -- the teachings of Jesus himself.[31] If Jesus' words had survived in primary form, our task would be easy; but since the only record of Jesus' teachings is the accounts of the gospel-writers, filtered as they are through the authors' own unique theological viewpoints and local church situations, we will have to limit ourselves to a few general theological observations.

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[30]I choose to speak of "forms" rather than "offices" because -- as we shall see -- there is no uniformity of practice in the early church in defining functions of ministry and in investing individuals to perform those functions. I am also using the term "ministry" in a very broad sense, since there is no formal indication that Jesus recognized offices of any kind in the community of his followers.

[31]I am following the broad consensus of New Testament scholarship in dating the various New Testament books in the following fashion. The earliest stratum is the undisputed Pauline letters of Romans, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon, all dated from the middle of the first century. To these I am also adding, for purposes of this study, the traditional Pauline letters that are in some circles considered to be of disputed authorship: 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians and 2 Thessalonians. (Since my argument is that these early materials contain no definitive evidence of ordination as we now know it, I am giving opponents of this view the benefit of the doubt by dating these letters as early as possible.) The second stratum, which overlaps the first to some degree, dates also from the first century, but ten or twenty years later. It includes Mark, Hebrews and 1 Peter. Closely following is the third layer -- Matthew, Luke, Acts and Jude. Then, around the end of the first century or the beginning of the second are the books that belong to the fourth stratum -- John, the three letters of John, Revelation, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus and James. The fifth stratum contains only 2 Peter, which certainly dates from the second century.

With one possible exception, there is no indication in the surviving words of Jesus that he ever intended to found an institutional church -- and this exception is difficult to attribute to Jesus himself.[32] Indeed, Jesus has nothing to say about the organizational structure of the religious institutions of his day -- he accepts them all, from Sanhedrin to synagogue, as given.[33]

Indeed, if Jesus promotes a church order at all, it can only be described in the simplest terms -- as, in Eduard Schweizer's

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[32]This possible exception is Jesus' "promise of the keys" to Peter, in which he proclaims, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18). This passage has been the subject of scholarly debate for centuries, and it is beyond the scope of this investigation to achieve any resolution of the debate here -- other than to point to the plausible explanation of Hans von Campenhausen, in Ecclesiastical Power and Spiritual Authority in the Church of the First Three Centuries, trans. J.A. Baker (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1969, pp. 17, 129ff., that it "is best understood as a piece of retrospective veneration on the part of a congregation devoted to [Jesus]" (pp. 130-131). Since this is the only occasion in all of scripture in which Jesus is recorded as uttering the word ekklesia, or "church," and since Jesus advocates everywhere else only the loosest organizational structure for his roving band of disciples, it seems unlikely that this saying originated with him. See also Robert W. Funk and Roy W. Hoover, The Five Gospels: The Search For the Authentic Words of Jesus (New York: Macmillan, 1993), p. 207.

[33]See Eduard Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, trans. Frank Clark (London: SCM, 1961), p. 24. See also Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics IV/3,2, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962), pp. 683-684. This is not to say that Jesus never prophetically criticizes certain individual religious leaders (see Mark 10:42, Mark 12:38ff., Luke 11:43); it is simply to observe that Jesus offers no critique of the religious organizations of his day as institutions. In light of the imminent parousia, the organizational structure of institutions is a matter of indifference to him.

language, a "flock" or an "open circle."[34] The vocational discipline of the members of this flock is to allow themselves to be "broken in pieces for the world."[35] Jesus permits no hierarchy among members of his flock, scrupulously resisting the periodic attempts of individual disciples to gain higher status (Mark 10:35-45). He advises his followers not to take the title "rabbi" (Matt. 23:11, Luke 22:26). In light of the urgency of the coming reign of God, a reign in which even the stones of the temple will be cast one from another (Mark 13:2), there is little importance to be attached to questions of institutional structure.

Indeed, Jesus seems unconcerned, throughout his ministry, with official credentials. He reaches out to people regardless of their status, crossing the social, political and theological barriers of his day with impunity. He garners criticism for spending time with "tax collectors and sinners" (Matt. 9:11). When John the Baptist sends emissaries to him, asking "Are you the one who is to come?," Jesus deflects their question, telling them instead to return to John, relating to their master that "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them" (Matt. 11:2-5). Jesus, in other words, steadfastly refuses to define himself in an official sense. He defines himself purely in terms of function -- and a servant function at that.

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[34]Church Order in the New Testament, pp. 22ff. See Mark 14:27, Luke 12:32.

[35]Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, p. 33.

Apart from general exhortations to humility and servanthood such as Mark 9:35 (about which we will have more to say later), Jesus has little to say that directly impacts upon ordination. We will need to look to the next stratum of tradition, the Pauline epistles, for the first emerging buds of ecclesiology.

Ministry in the Pauline Epistles

Even in the Pauline epistles, definitive descriptions of the early church's provisions for leadership are hard to find.[36] The letters are situational rather than systematic in nature, and for that reason the only discernible facts about the life of the Pauline churches are those that can be inferred from Paul's occasional advice. Nowhere in these letters is there a direct description of church office, nor is there mention of how leaders are appointed or installed.

It is clear, however, that there <u>are</u> leaders in the Pauline churches, and it is possible to make two general observations concerning them.

Paul's conception of leadership in the church has two general characteristics: it is <u>charismatic</u> and <u>corporate</u>. Ecclesiastical authority, to him, is always created, sustained and empowered by the Holy Spirit; and it is never exercised by individuals on their own behalf, but always by the consent and in the context of the

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[36]As with the teachings of Jesus, there is little indication to be found in the Pauline epistles of any institutionalized offices of ministry. Therefore, I am continuing to use the term "ministry" very broadly.

whole community of faith.

The Pauline understanding of ecclesiastical leadership is charismatic not in the sense of the modern "charismatic movement," but in the sense that Paul sees the responsibility for raising up church leaders as vested solely in the Holy Spirit. Paul sees certain Christians as recipients of particular charismata, or spiritual gifts; the Holy Spirit bestows these gifts in order that particular functions in the life of the church (prophecy, teaching, healing, administration, etc.) may be fulfilled.

A charisma is not the same as an ecclesiastical office -- it conveys no permanent authority to the individual as individual, nor may it be handed from one person to another. It is, in the words of R.P.C. Hanson, "occasional and purely functional."[37] There is no evidence in the undisputedly genuine Pauline epistles for a practice similar to the modern rite of ordination; charismata for service in the church are imparted directly by the Spirit. The concept of "office" in the modern sense is simply not a meaningful one for Paul; he sees himself dwelling in the shadow of an imminent parousia, and therefore his churches are, in the words of J. Christiaan Beker, "interim eschatological communities."[38]

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[37]Christian Priesthood Examined (London: Lutterworth, 1979), pp. 16-17. See also Hans Küng, The Church, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (London: Search Press, 1968), p. 395, and von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power..., p. 69. Some of the biblical passages that are indicative of Paul's flexible view of ministry as freely and occasionally given include Rom. 5:15-16; 6:23; 11:29; 12:6; 1 Cor. 1:7, 7:7, 12:4,9,28,30,31; 2 Cor. 1:11.

[38]Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), p. 303.

Thus, for Paul, there is effectively no distinction between "clergy" and "laity."[39] Since the resurrection, all Christians have been living, in Schweizer's terms, in "a cosmic suspension of time, on the cutting edge of what God the Holy Spirit is doing in the world."[40] The vocation of servanthood belongs to all Christians, with the particular character of that vocation determined by the various charismata the Spirit has bestowed.[41] Sometimes charismata are bestowed abruptly -- so much so that the Spirit may call upon a worshiper to rise and speak spontaneously in the assembly of believers (1 Cor. 14:29ff.). Yet however the charismata are given, they are to be accepted fairly uncritically -- the only criterion for judgment being the criterion of love (1 Cor. 13).[42]

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[39]See Bruce M. Metzger, "Paul's Vision of the Church," in Theology Today, vol. vi., 1949, p. 62.

[40]Church Order in the New Testament, pp. 97ff.

[41]Rom. 12:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:7-31; 14:26; Eph. 4:7-16.

[42]Two Pauline passages that have sometimes been quoted in opposition to this assessment of Paul's ecclesiology as charismatically flexible are the well-known lists of ministries in 1 Cor. 12:28 and Eph. 4:11. Theologians throughout history, including Calvin (Institutes IV.III.4), have cited these lists in order to justify their own church order. There are two difficulties, however, with using these lists in such a way. First, if they are indeed lists of offices that Paul is recommending for the early church, there is the problem of dealing with the contradictions between the two -- 1 Cor. 12:28 lists eight ministries and Eph. 4:11 only five, with the only ministries occurring at the same location in both lists being "apostle" and "prophet." "Teacher" is the only other ministry that occurs in both lists, but it is found in a different place in each -- third in the Corinthians list and last in Ephesians. Obviously, Paul is not laying down a blueprint of ministerial order for future generations. The second difficulty is that using these lists to establish hierarchies of offices is exactly opposite to Paul's own

Paul's charismatic conception of ecclesiastical leadership is further demonstrated by the targets he chooses for criticism. He finds his opponents not primarily among those who claim for themselves gifts of the Spirit, but rather among those whom he sees as Judaistic legalists (Gal. 5:12ff.). He gives particular encouragement to those who exercise the unfettered gift of prophecy, and advises the Thessalonians never to "quench the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:9).

Paul maintains his free-form, charismatic conception of church order even though he claims for himself the singularly official-sounding status of apostle (a status he regards as belonging to him for life). Apostleship is not for Paul a charismatic gift per se, but is rather a sort of historical claim, based on an encounter with the risen Lord and on a commission to proclaim the gospel to the unreached. Yet even so, Pauline apostleship is more of a function than an office; he uses the term so frequently, and to apply to so many individuals, that he clearly does not mean a college of twelve (in contrast to Luke, with his account in Acts 1:21-26 of the appointment of Matthias to fill Judas' place).[43]

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intention -- for his purpose in including them in these letters is not to safeguard authority belonging to particular individuals, but rather (in the face of excessive ambition on the part of some leaders) to insure that the charismata are viewed as evenly distributed among all. There is much to be said, in fact, for R.P.C. Hanson's suggestion that the order of the lists is not hierarchical but chronological: apostles come first only because they plant churches, and the rest come later because they build them up -- Christian Priesthood Examined, p. 16.

[43]On Paul and apostleship, see Anthony T. Hanson, The Pioneer Ministry (London: SCM, 1961), p. 97 and Beker, Paul the Apostle, pp. 321-322. Paul uses the word "apostle" to refer to himself in

Paul's charismatic ideal of leadership is not static, but shows some development across the years covered by his letters. There is a discernible movement in the direction of more fixed, institutional ministries. In his later letters, Paul still urges the people to respect the gifts of the Spirit, but there is a new emphasis: false teachers have become a continuing problem in the churches, and so he begins to mention more frequently the names of particular leaders whom he respects. The emphasis shifts from a free attitude of not "quenching the Spirit" to discerning and testing the true spiritual gifts. The structure of church order is still free and charismatic, but signs are already in place that Christianity is beginning to develop a more institutional self-understanding. The parousia is evidently not coming soon, so the church must consider the realities of its institutional existence.

The second general characteristic of Paul's theology of leadership is its corporate character. The most obvious instance of this is the fact that all Paul's letters -- with the sole exception of Philemon, which is not concerned with ecclesiastical affairs at all -- are addressed to churches rather than individuals. This would seem to indicate that there was no single episcopal figure presiding over each of these churches -- or if there was, that this person exercised authority in partnership with others. As von Campenhausen points out, in the Pauline churches

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Rom. 1:1; 11:13; 1 Cor. 1:1; 9:1-5; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; 12:11-12; Gal. 1:1 and Col. 1:1; to Andronicus and Junius in Rom. 16:7, to Apollos (1 Cor. 4:9), to two unnamed men (2 Cor. 8:23), to Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25) and to Silvanus and Timothy (1 Thess. 2:7).

"one member exhorts and edifies another."[44]

This is Paul's personal style as well. As we have seen, his role as apostle does not provide him with any prerogative to issue commands to the churches or to make decisions on their behalf; his tone is hortatory rather than imperative.[45] When faced with the opportunity to rule in an authoritarian fashion, Paul rejects that option (2 Cor. 1:24), and advises the people of his churches to do the same (1 Cor. 7:23; Gal. 5:13). In the midst of a leadership crisis in the Corinthian church, Paul asks, "What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each" (1 Cor. 3:5). When he speaks of colleagues in the faith, he often uses the expression "fellow-worker" (sunergoi).[46] Describing others who are involved in the work of evangelization, Paul freely uses the word "apostle," the same term he uses to apply to himself.[47] Thus, for Paul, ministry is corporate as well as charismatic. As Anthony Hanson has so aptly put it, the Pauline ministry "cannot accurately be described as ruling over the church, since its main aim is to serve the

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[44]Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power..., p. 63.

[45]See von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power...,p. 52.

[46]1 Cor. 3:9. The NRSV translators have moved away from this English expression, translating the phrase, "...we are God's servants, working together...," yet the meaning is similar.

[47]As von Campenhausen describes it, for Paul "the apostolate is entirely a matter of proclamation, not organization" -- Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power..., p. 53.

church."[48]

Significantly, the word most commonly translated "ministry" in the Pauline epistles is diakonia. The primary meaning of this word is "service," referring to the service rendered by slaves and others who wait at table, as well as to the work of other, more exalted servants, the household managers and stewards.[49] Paul uses it both in a specialized sense to refer to service in the church, and sometimes in a very ordinary sense.[50]

The word diakonia has been the subject of much discussion in recent decades, both in the world of scholarship and in the realm

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[48]The Pioneer Ministry, p. 85.

[49]The landmark study of this term is John N. Collins, Diakonia: Re-interpreting the Ancient Sources (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Collins argues, based on a study of biblical and Hellenistic Greek occurrences of the word, that modern scholarship and ecumenical dialogue have stretched diakonia far beyond its biblical meaning, a stretching which has taken place in two directions. On the one hand, the word has come to be seen as meaning humble, even menial service, as in waiting on tables; and on the other, it has been assigned a specialized meaning (mainly through ecumenical discussions), as the church's service to the poor and dispossessed. The original meaning of the term, Collins explains, is as a go-between, agent or attendant (p. 335). This implies neither self-abasement (many diaconal figures in the Greek world were not menial household slaves, but notable officials, in much the same sense as today's "ministers of state" or "public servants"), nor a generalized attitude of service to all the world (diaconal figures in the Greek world nearly always worked for one master). Collins is urging the church to reclaim the original meaning of diakonia, thereby defining its ordained ministry not so much as participation in the generalized service of all Christians, nor as serving the oppressed, but as service of God.

[50]On diakonia as service in the church, see Rom. 11:13; 12:7; 1 Cor. 3:5; 16:15; 2 Cor. 3:5-6; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3-4; 11:8; Eph. 3:7; 4:12; 6:21; Col. 1:7,23,25; 4:7,17); as ordinary household service, see Rom. 15:31; 2 Cor. 8:20; in an unusual vein, see 2 Cor. 11:14-15 for a reference to the servants of Satan.

of official ecumenical dialogue.[51] One of the most telling observations, however, is that of Eduard Schweizer, who remarks that, though koiné Greek is amply supplied with many words for offices and authority, Paul and the other biblical authors turn elsewhere for words to describe leadership in the church.[52] The word to which they turn most often is diakonia.

Paul's overwhelming preference for the everyday word diakonia makes it difficult to attribute to him any official conception of

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[51]See especially H.W. Beyer, "Diakonia," in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. Rudolf Kittel, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. II, pp. 81-93; Eduard Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament; André Lemaire, "From Services to Ministries: 'Diakoniae' in the First Two Centuries," in Concilium vol. 10, no. 8 (1972), pp. 35-49; Lemaire, "The Ministries in the New Testament, Recent Research," in Biblical Theology Bulletin vol. 3 (1973), pp. 133-166; and Lemaire, Ministry in the Church (London: SPCK, 1977). John N. Collins, in Diakonia, pp. 6-14, catalogues the burgeoning scholarly interest in the word. The use of diakonia as a key term in ecumenical discussion has been frequent; some principal examples are: World Council of Churches, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (Geneva: WCC, 1982); the 1961 Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi, one of whose principal themes was "Service" (the others being "Witness" and "Unity") -- see World Council of Churches, The New Delhi Report (New York: Association Press, 1962). L.E. Cooke, "Preliminary Reflections on the Assembly Document on 'Service,' in Ecumenical Review, vol. 13 (1960-61), p. 234 is a helpful summary of key issues arising from the New Delhi document. Collins traces the extensive influence of these predominantly Protestant ecumenical discussions on the Second Vatican Council in Diakonia, pp. 14-20.

[52]Church Order in the New Testament, pp. 171-180. Words that could have been used are arche to describe rule, time to describe dignity, telos to describe power and leitourgia to describe religious authority. The rarity of leitourgia is particularly noteworthy; it is the Septuagint term for priestly office, and would have been a readily available option for Paul, had he been interested in establishing formal offices of ministry in the churches he founded.

ministry.[53] Consistent with his charismatic, corporate approach to ecclesiology, he sees ecclesiastical leadership as a function rather than an office, with the Holy Spirit determining the particular means by which that function is fulfilled.[54]

It may seem, from the charismatic and corporate character of his conception of church order, that Paul is some kind of utopian, advocating a kind of holy anarchy for the church. It is perhaps more accurate to say that Paul does not give ecclesiastical matters much thought, dominated as he is by his eschatological vision. A charismatic ministerial order is perfectly reasonable for a church that is living in the last days.

Yet even so, Paul does make some provision for matters of practical administration. In 1 Cor. 12:28, for instance, he lists "administrators" (kuberneseis) as one of several charismatically gifted individuals necessary for the life of the body. In 1 Thess. 5:12 and 1 Cor. 16:16 he exhorts the people to pay church leaders proper respect.

It now remains to consider two possible objections to the view

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[53]This makes for some interesting decisions on the part of biblical translators. In Romans 16:1, for example, Paul mentions Phoebe, a leader in the church at Cenchreae. The RSV renders the word "deaconess"; the NRSV, undoubtedly reflecting more modern sensibilities concerning the ordination of women, chooses simply "deacon" -- although with a footnote explaining that it could be "minister." In reality, the root word is simply diakonos, and Paul most likely does not mean anything so institutional or official as the English "deacon."

[54]"There is no consistency," writes David L. Bartlett in Ministry in the New Testament (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), p. 39, "in the names and descriptions of 'offices' in the churches to whom Paul writes. Different churches apparently have different structures."

that Pauline ministerial order is purely charismatic and corporate.

The first is the traditional Roman Catholic position of Petrine supremacy -- that Peter exercises pre-eminent authority among the apostles, and that the book of Acts portrays Paul recognizing that hierarchy of church offices.

It is difficult to see how this follows, however, from the actual witness of Paul's letters. Acts is a secondary source of information on Paul's thought, for everything in that book is filtered through the distinctive theological viewpoint of its author, Luke. There is nothing in Paul's own writings to support the notion of Petrine supremacy.[55]

The second possible objection is based on Paul's greeting to the Philippians, "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (1:1b). If we take the NRSV translation at its face value, this passage may appear to suggest that Paul is recognizing a hierarchy of ecclesiastical offices -- similar, perhaps, to two of the offices in the modern threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon. This, however, is not necessarily the case. We have already seen how the word diakonos has a generic as well as an official sense; the same is true of episkopé, which means "oversight." It is likely that the

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[55]It is true that Paul sometimes seems to defer to the authority of "the saints in Jerusalem," but the leading light of that group is James the brother of Jesus, not Peter. In Gal. 2:11, Paul reports how he disagreed with Peter -- that he "opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned." If it is true, as the traditional Roman Catholic view indicates, that Paul believes Peter to be the dominically-appointed monarchical ruler of the church, then he is certainly guilty of insubordination.

church in Philippi had a group of leaders or overseers, as well as a group of designated servants or helpers, but it is by no means certain that this is an official structure that prevailed in the other Pauline churches. Besides, the word "overseers" or "bishops" occurs in the plural -- indicating that, at the very least, this is not a case of monarchical episcopacy.[56]

Inasmuch, then, as Paul has a conception of ministerial order at all, it is a very peculiar one by modern standards. The particular form in which leadership is exercised in a given community is a matter of relative indifference to him, as long as it is the Holy Spirit doing the ordering. Although he claims for himself the title "apostle," Paul demonstrates few of the prerogatives of apostolic authority that later generations have attached to that name. He characteristically defers to the corporate will of the local church, preferring the winsome ways of

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[56]See R.P.C. Hanson, Christian Priesthood Examined (London: Lutterworth, 1979), p. 17, and Günther Bornkamm, Paul, trans. D.M.C. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 83. Some have tried to discern in the Bible evidence for a single office of "presbyter-bishop" -- based largely on the interchangeability of these terms in Paul's speech in Acts 20:17ff., on the account of his appointing elders in Acts 14:23 and on the absence of references to elders in his own writings. Raymond Brown, Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections (New York: Paulist, 1970), p. 66, takes such a view, as do H.J. Wotherspoon and J.M. Kirkpatrick in A Manual of Church Doctrine According to the Church of Scotland, revised T.F. Torrance and Ronald Selby Wright (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 80. It must be pointed out, however, that Luke rather than Paul is the author of Acts, and that the book necessarily reflects the Lukan ecclesiological viewpoint. Even though the words of these speeches are placed in the mouth of Paul, they are not as indicative of Paul's own thought as those in the Pauline epistles themselves. The verdict on the existence of established ministerial offices in the first-generation Pauline churches must remain "not proven."

persuasion to the authoritarian certainty of command. Ministry is to him a matter of humble service to Jesus Christ, a matter of function rather than office. There is no foundation in the Pauline literature on which to base a particular theology of ordination that excludes all others; to Paul, ministerial order is always a secondary concern, subordinate to the over-arching priority of proclaiming the gospel.

Ministry in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

We turn now to the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke and to the Acts of the Apostles. We will consider these books together not because they present a unified theology or a monolithic conception of ministerial order, but because they are chronologically close to one another in date of composition. Our brief survey will reveal that these books demonstrate even further diversity in their theology of ministry.

The most significant difference between the conception of ministry in the synoptics/Acts and that in the Pauline epistles is that the charismatic nature of ministry is almost completely absent. The word charisma, in fact, never occurs in the synoptics or Acts. This does not mean that the communities represented by these books are rigid and hierarchical in their conception of ministry; it merely means that their authors do not attribute leadership in the church to the Holy Spirit in the same way Paul does.

Mark demonstrates no sense of official ministry at all. He

reports on Jesus sending the disciples out to perform various tasks, and investing them with appropriate authority to perform those tasks, but in every instance the task is of temporary duration (Mark 3:14-15; 6:7). There is no sense that ministerial authority attaches to the disciples ex officio, through any investiture or ordination rite. On the contrary, Mark reports how Jesus commends humble service as the norm: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all" (9:35).

Nor is there any sense in Mark that status as an apostle bears with it any special authority, or is any way a proto-office. Mark uses the word apostolos only once (6:30), and then in the context of the "apostles'" (literally, the "sent-out-ones'") return from a specific mission. Every time Mark uses the word diakonos, it is in the ordinary sense of household servant.

Although the Matthean church sees itself symbolically as a renewed and cleansed Israel, there is no evidence that its organization takes the form of a hierarchy of offices, as in Israel of old. Authority is apparently exercised by those who step forward to claim it; there is no evidence in the book for ordination to particular office, whether by apostolic action or by any other means.[57] Matthew does not, in fact, use the word apostolos at all. As in Mark, where diakonos occurs it always bears the ordinary sense of household servant.

Luke/Acts, however, tells a very different story. Unlike Matthew and Mark, this two-volume work is a conscious attempt to

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[57]E. Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, pp. 60ff.

relate the early history of Christianity. Consequently, it is one which reveals much about the churches for which it was written, and therefore requires us to give it closer attention.[58]

Luke clearly assumes that there is some sort of order present in the church, but nowhere in his writings does he lay that order out systematically. Elders and apostles apparently form a sort of directorate in Jerusalem, from which authority emanates (Acts 15:2ff.; 15:22; 16:4), but prophetic speakers also exercise an authoritative role. Any disciple is permitted to baptize (Acts 9:39-41). Far from laying out a blueprint for church order, Luke is concerned, as Schweizer puts it, with writing "an account of a church that is prepared to be shown new and unaccustomed ways and also to take them," and to describe how particular individuals are separated out from the larger Christian community for these special tasks.[59]

A unique characteristic of Luke's ecclesiology is the emphasis he places on apostolicity. Unlike the other synoptic gospel-writers, Luke frequently uses the word apostolos in his account of Jesus' ministry, and even more frequently in Acts. From

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[58]Luke/Acts is of course most reliable in bearing witness to the practices of the author's own particular community (whichever one that may have been). As we have already mentioned in considering the Pauline writings, the differences between Luke's account of Paul's actions and Paul's own account of them (as expressed in, or as inferred from, his letters) are particularly noteworthy.

[59]Church Order in the New Testament, p. 73. There is even something of the implicitly charismatic in Luke: "...the greatness of Luke's view lies in his showing more impressively than anyone else that the church can live only by evangelizing and by following whatever new paths the Spirit indicates" (p. 75).

Luke's account of the choice of Matthias to fill a vacancy in what some commentators have called the "college" of apostles (Acts 1:21ff.), it is clear that Luke limits apostolicity to those who are eyewitnesses of the risen Lord, and who have received a special call to bear public witness.[60] Thus, for Luke, genuine apostolicity is limited to the first generation.[61] Apostles in Luke/Acts are neither missionaries, bishops of churches nor officeholders who transmit their authority to others according to a "succession" of order or doctrine, but are instead a body of specially called eyewitnesses who meet together to make decisions on behalf of the church, after having consulted the membership en masse.[62]

Luke uses the word diakonos most often in the ordinary sense, but we can see in some instances in the book of Acts the emergence of a specialized sense. Acts 6:2-4 tells of the apostles' choice of certain Christians to assume the task of providing the widows of the community with food, so they themselves can devote themselves "to prayer and to serving the word." In the account of Matthias' appointment which we have already considered, Luke speaks of Matthias "taking the place in this ministry (diakonos) and apostleship from which Judas turned aside" (Acts 1:25). In Acts

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[60]See von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power..., p. 23; also Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, p. 69.

[61]This is in contrast to Paul, who uses apostolos to refer to many who have not personally seen the risen Christ.

[62]Raymond E. Brown, Priest and Bishop..., pp. 47ff.

20:24 and 21:19, Luke speaks of Paul's "ministry," and in 19:22 of Timothy and Erastus, two of Paul's "helpers." While Luke's conception of church order is still very loose, there is beginning to emerge in these uses of diakonos a new, specialized sense of something resembling ministerial office.[63]

We also see in Luke/Acts, for the first time in any New Testament writings, the presence of something resembling a rite of ordination. These incidents are:

> Acts 6:1-6 -- the apostles pray and lay hands on the "seven men of good standing" who are chosen to care for the widows.
>
> Acts 13:2-3 -- the Christians of Antioch "set apart" Barnabas and Saul for their missionary journey through fasting, prayer and the laying on of hands. In Acts 14:26, Luke recalls this incident in Antioch, "where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had completed."

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[63]Paralleling Luke's heightened concern for ministry as an office there is a more clearly defined official role for elders (presbuteros). This word never occurs in Paul's writings, and in the other synoptics it always refers to chronologically older people or to Jewish elders, but here in Acts we see the first mention in the New Testament of elders as an office -- the council of elders in Jerusalem, presided over by James the brother of Jesus (11:29-30; see also 15:2ff.; 15:22; 15:33; 16:4; 21:18). To this council, which undoubtedly has roots in Judaism, Luke assigns the special role of guarding the Christian tradition. In Acts 14:23 we hear of Paul appointing elders in Lystra and Derbe -- an office Paul never mentions in his own writings, not even in all the numerous greetings and closing salutations which mention church leaders by name.

Acts 14:23 -- Paul and Barnabas appoint elders in the churches of Lystra and Derbe, then with prayer and fasting they "entrust them to the Lord."

Acts 15:40 -- Paul chooses Silas to accompany Barnabas and himself on their second missionary journey, and the Christians of Antioch "commend him to the grace of the Lord."

In the first two of these incidents, the laying on of hands is part of the act of commissioning.[64] In the third, the laying on of hands is apparently not included, since only prayer and fasting are mentioned; and in the fourth, there are no details given as to precisely how the people "commend [Silas] to the grace of the Lord."

Although Luke is clearly concerned that the church have qualified leaders -- probably to counter the challenge of false teachers -- there does not appear to be much uniformity among the churches of Luke/Acts as to how such leaders are set apart. The laying on of hands is a significant rite, but as we have seen from our previous survey of the varied uses for this act in Luke/Acts and elsewhere, it is not unequivocally associated with the appointment or commissioning of leaders. The most we can say about these incidents in Luke/Acts is that they are proto-ordinations, bearing some resemblance to the modern rite of ordination, but by

[64]We have considered these passages under "The Laying On of Hands in the New Testament," earlier in this chapter.

no means equivalent to it.

The churches of the synoptics and Acts, then, show differing conceptions of ministerial order. Matthew and Mark show no sign at all of formal offices or positions of leadership among Jesus' disciples. The churches of Luke/Acts, on the other hand, are apparently beginning to develop some form of institutional ministry, even though it is not described directly. The Lukan church order is characterized by the rule of elders and a strong emphasis on the regular transfer of teaching authority: first from one resurrection-eyewitness to another in the appointment of Matthias, then through the designation by Paul of persons to bear authority in the churches he founded.[65]

Ministry in the Johannine Literature

The next significant portion of biblical material to consider is the gospel of John, and the Johannine literature consisting of the three letters of John and the book of Revelation. These books share a common theological viewpoint, suggesting that they are products of the same church or churches. Although it is unlikely that the same author wrote all five books, it is entirely possible that the author or authors of the letters of John and Revelation

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[65]It is essential to mention again that, although Luke is describing the actions of Paul, we cannot by any means be certain that this official idea of ministry is Pauline. More likely, Luke is reflecting the practices of the churches with which he is most familiar. The fact that our survey of the Pauline epistles has turned up no sign of an official conception of ministry strongly suggests that Luke is seeking a Pauline imprimatur for his own ecclesiology.

were disciples of the author of the gospel.

The Johannine ecclesiology is distinctly different from that the Pauline literature, the synoptics and Acts. For John, the church is not a charismatic community, nor an "open circle" of disciples, nor an apostolically-constituted teaching community. Rather, it is a body of believers in present relationship to the risen and reigning Christ. All that is decisive for faith, in John's view, has already taken place, and it remains only for men and women to choose between light and darkness, between Christ and the powers of this world.[66] Far from being an open circle, looking out in the direction of the world and inviting people in, the Johannine church is in many ways a closed circle of believers turned inward, away from the world -- looking always toward Christ, who is at the center of the circle. John demonstrates a strong sense of predestination as well, understanding that new members of the circle enter only because God wills it to be so.

There is no trace, in John, of the sort of charismatic gifts that play such a leading role in the churches of the Pauline epistles. For John there is only one spiritual gift: the revelation of the light of God in Christ. The task of all Christians is the same as the task of John the Baptist in the prologue to John: "to testify to the light" (John 1:7). John avoids the concept of apostleship altogether, seeing the task of Christian witness as belonging to the whole community; nor does he

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[66]See Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, pp. 121ff.

reveal any inkling of ordination or church office.[67] He uses the word diakonos only in the ordinary sense of household servant. Wherever the word presbuteros occurs, it means only an elderly person.

The same is true of the Johannine epistles and Revelation, which similarly show no conception of ministerial order. There are only two possible exceptions to this: the fact that the second and third letters of John are written by someone called "the elder," and the frequent mention in Revelation of the company of twenty-four elders gathered around the throne of the Lamb.[68] As for the author of the letters of John, it is entirely possible that "the elder" is not a presbyter in an official sense, but rather an older, respected Christian to whom the author is deferring.[69] In the case of Revelation, there is no evidence for any function other than an eschatological one for these "elder" figures; and the book is filled with enough unearthly imagery anyway that it is difficult indeed to detect traces of church life in the community for which

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[67]See von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power..., p. 27, and Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, p. 207.

[68]There are numerous verses in Revelation mentioning this company of elders; some representative examples are Rev. 4:4, 5:5, and 7:11).

[69]In fact, as von Campenhausen points out, the ideological opponent in 3 John, a man named Diotrephes, is criticized for assuming too much authority for himself: he "puts himself first," refusing to acknowledge the teaching of the elder (v. 9); and he is expelling from the church those with whom he disagrees (v. 10). The elder would prefer that teaching credentials be judged not by personal fiat, but according to the extent that the person's viewpoint conforms to "the teaching of Christ" (2 John 9).

it was written.[70]

Clearly, the problem of false teachers is a thorny one for the Johannine community. With the figure of Jesus Christ himself occupying the central, authoritative role in these churches, the identification of false teachers would have been especially difficult -- since so much of teaching authority would have depended upon subjective experience. The later Johannine response -- demonstrated particularly in the letters of John -- is to maintain the centrality of the individual's union with Christ, and to assert that false teachers are unqualified because they have never truly experienced this union.[71]

The Johannine literature does not reveal much of the ecclesiology of its community, but what traces of ministerial order we can identify point to a conception of church leadership that is quite different from that of the other New Testament churches. The Johannine church is similar to that of the Pauline epistles in its flexibility and evangelical emphasis, but demonstrates nothing of the Pauline conception of charismatic ministry. It is similar to the synoptics and to Luke/Acts in its Christ-centeredness, but contains nothing of Luke's emphasis on apostolicity and rule by elders. Once again, we see in this portion of the biblical literature yet another variation, contributing to a pattern of

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[70]On the contrary, Revelation reflects what Schweizer calls "a church without a hierarchy," in which all of the elect are kings and priests (1:6, 5:10), God's servants (7:3) and saints (5:8) -- Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, p. 134.

[71]Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, p. 126.

increasing diversity.

Ministry in the Pastoral Epistles

The pastoral epistles -- 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus -- are highly important documents for the study of ministerial order, even though they may be peripheral to some other New Testament studies. In the Pastorals we see for the first time a list of the qualifications for particular institutional ministries, those of bishop (episkopos) and deacon (diakonos).

Confronted with the problem of false teachers, the authors of the pastorals write from an emerging sense of the need for church discipline.[72] They respond to the problem by emphasizing the maintenance of tradition and the orderly transfer of teaching authority, and in this sense are similar to Luke/Acts. Their conception of church order is static, leaning somewhat in the direction of authoritarianism; it has fewer affinities with the loose, charismatic order of Paul than with the tradition-minded heritage of Luke/Acts and the Jewish system of elders.[73]

Von Campenhausen detects in the pastoral epistles two separate, interwoven strains of tradition:

> These three offices [of bishop, presbyter and deacon] are, however, for the most part not mentioned in the same breath. Where bishops and deacons occur, the presbyters are commonly missing, and where the presbyters are under discussion, there is no reference to bishops and deacons.

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[72]See especially Titus 1:10ff.; 3:10-11; 1 Tim. 6:3-6; 2 Tim. 3:6-7.

[73]See von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power..., p. 116.

> This argues for the hypothesis that the Pastoral Epistles are interweaving different traditions, which up to this point have followed separate courses.[74]

Ministerial order in the pastorals is more fixed and rigid than the freewheeling charismatic approach of the genuine Pauline epistles. The word charisma is used in a wholly different fashion in this later literature. No longer are charismata gifts imparted directly to an individual by the Spirit, but rather ones that are passed on from one charismatically gifted individual to another through an act similar to ordination (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6). It would appear that the pastorals also take it for granted that ordination is only for those who demonstrate certain characteristics or personality traits.[75] In having moved far beyond the simple charismatic order of the Pauline churches, the pastorals can properly be said to represent a second-generation church order, one which has more fully accommodated itself to living as an institution among other institutions in the world.

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[74]Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power..., p. 107. Von Campenhausen sees two distinct streams of tradition with regard to church office: a "Pauline-episcopal tradition" with bishops and deacons, and a parallel tradition of rule by elders, a tradition that was particularly strong in Asia Minor. He sees the interchangeable use of the titles "elder" and "bishop" in Titus 1:5-7 as further evidence of this blending of the two streams. Von Campenhausen's two-streams hypothesis, while provocative, is hard to justify on the basis of the Pauline literature, which is occasional and unsystematic in nature. Paul's eschatological preoccupations, as we have seen, kept him from developing any distinctive tradition of ministerial order.

[75]For example, see 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:7-9 for qualifications of bishops. As Raymond Brown has wryly noted, however, (in Priest and Bishop, pp. 35-36), it is unlikely that Paul himself would have met these qualifications -- for he was certainly not temperate (Gal. 5:12), nor dignified (Gal. 3:1), nor gentle (Phil. 3:2).

Ronald Osborn, in his 1967 study, In Christ's Place: Christian Ministry in Today's World, aptly summarizes this shift in these words:

> The earliest community of believers relied on a ministry which was dominantly charismatic and functional, though not without order (under the leadership of the apostolate); by the end of the century the church had learned the necessity of a ministry of the Word which was primarily official and subject to order, though not without its charismata.[76]

In the pastorals, there are some contexts in which diakonos has clearly come to have the sense of a particular ministry, that of "deacon."[77] It is not true, however, that the word has this specific sense of office everywhere it occurs in the pastorals; it still may mean service in general in some contexts.[78]

The word presbuteros, on the other hand, never has the sense of a specific ministry; it simply refers to older men. The pastorals, in fact, reveal only two orders of ministry: bishops and deacons. Yet even so, there does seem to be an assumption that it is the older, more experienced members of the community (the "elders" in the generic sense) who are to engage in preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17). On one occasion, as we have seen, the word is in fact used interchangeably with episkopé (Titus 1:5-9). It may be that, in the churches of the pastorals, chronological

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[76](St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1967), p. 68.

[77]Like bishops, deacons need to demonstrate certain personal qualifications (1 Tim. 3:8-13). The qualifications listed are consistent with those ordinarily required of someone having responsibility over the financial affairs of an institution.

[78]For example, 1 Tim. 1:12; 4:6; 2 Tim. 1:18; 4:5.

eldership is highly regarded, and that the older men of the community form a sort of talent pool out of which the official leaders are recruited. It also seems that these elders are the ones who are to perform ordination by the laying on of hands (1 Tim. 4:14). Yet it would probably be stretching the meaning of the word to infer that the churches of the pastorals have ordained officials called "elders," in the same way that they apparently do have officeholders called bishops and deacons.

The word episkopé, however, does refer in the pastorals to a particular ministry, that of bishop. The fact that this word is always used in the singular, coupled with the fact that these letters are all addressed to individuals rather than churches, suggests that the author understands each community to have within it a single episcopal figure.[79] Yet the bishops of the pastorals are not in any sense monarchical bishops; nowhere is there evidence that these overseers of the flock make unilateral decisions. Rather, the author exhorts those who exercise episkopé to overcome their ideological opponents through the strength of their arguments rather than through personal authority.[80] It is in fact possible, as some have suggested, that episkopé in the pastorals is a generic

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[79]See von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power..., pp. 107-108.

[80]This is supported by the particular qualities the author seeks to encourage in Timothy, Titus and others exercising oversight. Timothy is advised to be a good teacher, to exhort the flock and to correct opponents with patience (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:24-25; 4:2-5). Titus is also advised to teach well, and to serve as a source of sound doctrine (Titus 1:9; 2:7-8). The lists of qualifications for this office likewise bear this out (1 Tim. 3:1ff.; Titus 1:7-9).

term for teachers or overseers in general -- so hazy is the picture of this order of ministry.[81]

The pastoral epistles, then, show a conception of ministerial order that is more highly developed than in any of the other New Testament documents. There is strong emphasis on the maintenance of tradition and on the orderly transfer of teaching authority through ordination; gone is the loose charismatic order of the days of Paul. Two ministerial orders -- deacon and bishop -- are in place in these churches, although the order of elder does not appear at all.

Yet though we can identify the presence of these two offices, it is by no means clear what particular form they take; the author is more concerned with the moral character of officeholders than with ministerial order itself.[82] The pastorals evidently provide us with a snapshot of these ministries very soon after they have become distinguishable as such, and before they have attained a high degree of structure. The appearance of a hierarchy of offices and of the threefold order of ministry (deacon, presbyter, bishop) is a post-New Testament development.

Ministry in Other Writings of the New Testament

It now remains to consider the few other indications of

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[81]Patrick Burke, "Monarchical Episcopate at the End of the First Century," in Journal of Ecumenical Studies, vol. 7, 1970, p. 501. See also von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power..., p. 113, n. 260.

[82]J.K.S. Reid, The Biblical Doctrine of the Ministry (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1955), p. 27.

ministerial order in the New Testament. The books of 1 Peter, Hebrews and James each have something to tell us about ministry in their respective churches, but what they have to relate is highly fragmentary. Their evidence is at best suggestive, but its cumulative effect is to suggest an even greater degree of diversity among the New Testament churches.

1 Peter, an early letter roughly contemporary with some of Paul's writings, shows similarities to Pauline ministerial order. It, too, reflects a charismatic conception of ministry. The author understands there to be a variety of forms of service, flowing forth from the same spiritual gift.[83] Yet the church of 1 Peter shows one principal difference compared to the Pauline churches: authority in the church is exercised by a collective eldership, composed of Christians who are advanced in years (1 Peter 5:1-5). This idea, as we have seen, is completely foreign to the Pauline writings.[84]

The letter to the Hebrews demonstrates a conception of ministerial order that is radically different from that of every other book of the New Testament. Hebrews recognizes the need for authority in the church, but names no offices; only Christ bears the titles "apostle" and "priest."[85] Hebrews is in fact extremely

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[83]1 Peter 4:10-11. Compare to 1 Cor. 7:7, Rom. 12:6, and especially 1 Cor. 12:4-11.

[84]The word presbuteros, as we have noted, never occurs in the Pauline epistles.

[85]The author of Hebrews takes pains to distance Christ, as high priest, from the high priests of ancient Israel. Christ is "a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:20; see also

anti-institutional; it does not leave room for even the charismatic ministerial order of the Pauline churches. To the author of Hebrews, ministerial authority resides only in Christ, who continues to be present to the whole church through the Spirit.[86]

The only other New Testament passage concerning ministry that is worth noting is from James, a book that otherwise offers little that is of relevance to our study. In James 5:14, we learn that the elders of the church are responsible for spiritual healing, through prayer and anointing with oil.[87] This short book gives us no other indication of what other tasks in the church belong to the elders, or even of whether the eldership is an institutional ministry in any formal sense at all.

The Diversity of Ministries in the New Testament

Those who look to the New Testament for a single pattern of ministry, transmitted from Jesus himself through the apostles to the present-day church, search in vain. There is no single New Testament pattern of ministry, any more than there is a single New Testament church. Rather, the documents of the New Testament bear witness to a dizzying variety of ecclesiastical structures and forms of ministry.

We have observed this through our survey of New Testament

7:15ff.) -- not, significantly, a high priest connected in lineal succession with the high priests of the temple in Jerusalem.

[86]Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, p. 116.

[87]This is the only place in the New Testament where healing is mentioned as pertaining to elders.

passages that mention the appointment of leaders or the laying on of hands. At least six Greek verbs (kathistemi, tasso, tithemi, poieo, horizo and cheirotoneo) are used to describe the act; furthermore, there are numerous functions mentioned for the laying on of hands (healing, blessing, imparting the Holy Spirit or spiritual gifts, commissioning and arrest -- as well as two other passages in which the function is less than clear). All this suggests that, while the practice of the laying on of hands appears to be well-known throughout the New Testament church, there is a variety of meanings assigned to it. From this it appears unlikely that there was a widely-practiced ordination rite among the first- and second-generation Christian churches.

We have also seen how the words of Jesus contain little or no concept of an emerging church at all, although there is a continual exhortation to servanthood on the part of the disciples. The writings of Paul, intimately concerned as they are with the founding and nurturing of churches, never mention ecclesiastical office -- other than a loose, charismatic and corporate conception of ministry, enabled by the ordering of the Spirit. Luke/Acts is primarily concerned with the proper transmission of correct doctrine, and so calls for a clearly defined first-generation apostolate, succeeded in later generations by an eldership whose chief function is to guard tradition. The Johannine literature is likewise concerned with the handing-on of true doctrine, but recommends no official structure for doing so, and even seems to oppose those who would claim authority ex officio. The pastoral

epistles call for deacons and bishops, but no elders; Acts, 1 Peter, James and Revelation call for elders, but no deacons or bishops.

Even the much-debated notion of apostolicity, by which many churches seek to justify their own ministerial order, is in reality a loose collection of widely varying practices. In Matthew and Mark, the apostles are an eschatological fellowship of Jesus' followers, who exist for the primary purpose of ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel in the last days.[88] For Luke, the apostles are a college of twelve personally constituted by Jesus for the purpose of preserving correct doctrine. For Paul, apostles are church-planting missionaries, called and sent out spontaneously by the Spirit. In light of this diversity, it is difficult indeed for any one ecclesiastical tradition to exclusively label its own ministry "apostolic" -- for the ensuing question would be, "Apostolic according to which biblical writer's definition?"

There is no single pattern for ministry in the New Testament. Scripture is consistently uncooperative with those who would seek in its varied writings an unassailable mandate for their own church's ministerial order. There are many passages that suggest one office or another, but no one pattern is universal. All are local variations, representing the attempt of Christians in one particular place to organize their witness in the most faithful way.

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[88]Von Campenhausen, Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power..., p. 16.

J.K.S. Reid has aptly commented that God has not provided in the New Testament foolproof conditions for the apostolic succession of any one church order, but that God "certainly seems to have provided foolproof conditions for a continual succession of theologians to fumble around in the resultant obscurity."[89] That must be our verdict, too, on the existence of any definitive New Testament ministerial order.

Diakonia in New Testament Theology

There are numerous New Testament passages, however, that deal with the concept of ministry or service from a theological point of view: and a number of these are worth highlighting as useful to our study of leadership in the early church. In this section, we will focus particularly on the concept of diakonia, variously translated

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[89]The Biblical Doctrine of the Ministry, p. 37. See also Raymond E. Brown, Priest and Bishop, pp. 72-73; R.P.C. Hanson, Christian Priesthood Examined, p. 12; and Anthony T. Hanson, The Pioneer Ministry, p. 12. There has been quite a debate among twentieth-century scholars, particularly of the Anglican and Reformed traditions, as to the precise meaning of apostolic succession. One point of view, advanced by Charles Gore, The Church and the Ministry (London: Longmans, 1919), K.E. Kirk, ed., The Apostolic Ministry (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946) and A. G. Hébert, Apostle and Bishop: A Study of the Gospel, the Ministry and the Church Community (London: Faber & Faber, 1963), asserts that there is a long, strong tradition of apostolicity, extending back even into the Old Testament. This position is based on a word-study of the Hebrew saliah, or "envoy." Gore and Kirk use this word to assert that Jesus himself began a string of apostolic ordinations, unbroken to this day. Other scholars, though, have come to see the Gore/Kirk argument as deeply flawed, particularly because of the tenuous linguistic connection to saliah. Some of these include Reid (see above), Arnold Ehrhardt, The Apostolic Ministry and G.W.H. Lampe, Some Aspects of the New Testament Ministry (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948). The debate centers around whether or not the full-blown saliah concept was prevalent at the time of Jesus, or whether it emerged only later.

"servanthood" or "ministry."[90]

The New Testament knows no difference between service and ministry; it is the English language that has introduced a distinction between the two. A further distinction has been introduced with the transliteration of diakonos into the English word "deacon." There is little justification in most of the New Testament texts themselves for the division of this word into three different meanings ("servant," "minister" and "deacon"); the only reason for the triple translation seems to be the subsequent practice of the church. A survey of the New Testament's use of the word yields a very simple picture of a church unencumbered by administrative structures or offices, living simply under what it perceives to be the ordering of the Holy Spirit, and awaiting the imminent parousia.

An excellent example of this pristinely simple concept of church leadership is Matthew 20:26-28.[91] In this account, the disciples James and John seek honored places at Jesus' side in the coming kingdom. Jesus rebukes them in their social climbing: "...whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave." The word

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[90]I am following the work of John N. Collins in Diakonia, in regarding the common English equivalent of diakonia to be "servanthood" -- with "servanthood" taken to mean ordinary service, not menial self-abasement, and not advocacy for the dispossessed. Diakonia means service to one master, Jesus Christ.

[91]The parallels are Mark 10:43-45 and Luke 22:26-27.

used here, of course, is diakonos. To Jesus, ministry is service.[92] Any attempt by the church to institute offices of ministerial leadership must wrestle diligently with Jesus' concept of radical servanthood, or else be guilty of ignoring one of the fundamental characteristics of Christian discipleship.

Another relevant passage is the election of the disciple Matthias as the twelfth apostle, "to take the place in this ministry [diakonos] and apostleship from which Judas turned aside..." (Acts 1:25). We have already seen, in our consideration of the synoptic gospels and Acts (above), how Luke has a collegiate model of the apostolate: the apostles form a college of twelve, so the vacancy left by Judas needs to be filled in order for the church's witness to be complete.

Yet there are several problems with this account that make it difficult to use it as a foundation for subsequent institutional ministry. First, it is apparently a one-time occurrence. Matthias is named to complete the college of apostles, but there is no subsequent mention, in scripture or in any other source, of the filling of other vacancies in the apostolate. Second, talent is not considered at all in the selection process; Matthias is chosen by lot. Nowhere else in the New Testament do we have an example of a person being chosen by lot to fulfill a task. In one sense, God can be seen as the person selecting Matthias -- which would

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[92]See Colin Kruse, New Testament Foundations of Ministry (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1983), ch. 4, for a thorough treatment of Jesus' self-perception as servant, and of his exhortation of his disciples to do likewise.

strengthen the case for treating Matthias' selection as a one-time occurrence, never to be repeated. Third, there is the use of the word diakonos itself. Jesus' concept of servant ministry is carried forward into the book of Acts: the word "apostleship" is used, but it is teamed with the word for servanthood -- defying any attempt to interpret apostleship as anything other than a duty of subordination to the good of the whole body.[93]

It is clear from the writings of Paul that he, too, operates from a conception of ministry as service. We will survey several passages that are indicative of his view.

In response to the factionalism of the Christians at Corinth, Paul strongly emphasizes the role of church leaders as servants:

> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. For we are God's servants, working together..." (1 Corinthians 3:5-9)

Later in the same letter, Paul goes further. In describing himself, Paul speaks of how he has voluntarily taken on a yoke of slavery. This is in order that the gospel might be spread more

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[93]Much has been written about the concept of apostleship in the New Testament. The related notion of apostolic succession is in fact one of the most difficult points of division in the ecumenical church. This is not the place to enter into that debate: but it is useful for our purposes to point out that there are at least two distinctive conceptions of apostleship in the New Testament: the "collegiate" conception of Luke/Acts that we are examining here, and the Pauline conception, which is much looser. For Paul, apostleship seems to be less an institutional office and more a spiritual gift; to him, the word "apostle" is a functional term, roughly synonymous with "church-planter."

easily: "For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them." (1 Corinthians 9:19). And again, in 2 Corinthians 4:5: "For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake."[94] For Paul, this yoke of servanthood implies suffering: "for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body" (Gal. 6:17).[95]

Expanding our study beyond the word "diakonia" itself, we may observe that humility is a signal characteristic of Christian leaders. When the disciples ask Jesus who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus calls a child to him, and exhorts the disciples to imitate children: "Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4).[96] In Pauline theology, the lordship of Christ implies also the servanthood of those who follow him as his disciples: servanthood not only with respect to Christ, but with respect also to those in the Christian community whom leaders serve.

In the Pauline literature, it is clear that the proper place of Christians is the humble role:

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[94]In popular use, this verse is often misquoted, omitting the final portion, "...with ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake." In Pauline theology, the lordship of Christ implies also the servanthood of those who follow him as disciples -- servanthood not only with respect to Christ, but with respect also to those in the Christian community whom leaders serve.

[95]As Colin Kruse points out in New Testament Foundations of Ministry, pp. 35ff., 177ff., there is much continuity between Paul's conception of himself as a servant, and Jesus' own self-conception as a suffering servant after the model of Isaiah.

[96]The parallels are Mark 9:33-37 and Luke 9:46-48.

> Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

This theme of boasting, proper and improper, is sounded many times throughout the Pauline literature. Actively seeking a humble role, Paul avoids any implication that he is boasting about his own merits or talents as he proclaims the gospel in power:

> ...not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of Spirit... (2 Corinthians 3:4-6)

Later in the same book, we hear of ministry as being possible only "by God's mercy." (4:1).[97] Human capabilities do not enter into the equation; the author sees himself as wholly a vessel of the divine will. Even though there may at times be a temptation to claim ministerial authority, it is clear that all authority comes from God, and is for the sole purpose of building up the church: "For even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it" (2 Cor. 10:8).

The boasting theme again comes into play in chapter 12, concerning the mysterious "thorn in the flesh":

> Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in

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[97]One textual variant renders this phrase, "...as we have received mercy." Even so, the meaning is similar enough for our purposes.

> weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:8-10)

It is clear, from the above passage and from others we have cited as expressing the boasting theme, that discipleship in the Christian community is governed by an upside-down ethic. Power belongs not to those in the community who are powerful by the world's standards -- in other words, to the leaders. Their power is "made perfect in weakness." Power, competence and authority all belong to God; they are entrusted to certain people who are gifted by the Spirit to serve the people, exercising stewardship over their gifts for the ultimate goal of building up the body of Christ.

The definitive expression of this giftedness on behalf of the whole body is 1 Corinthians 12:12ff. All members work together in the one body of Christ, which "does not consist of one member, but of many" (12:14). Paul subsequently lists a number of tasks to be performed in the church (12:27ff.). Although individuals may be gifted to perform one or more of these functions, he points out, no one can do them all. Paul then goes on in Chapter 13 to praise love, the greatest of all spiritual gifts and the one that transcends all the rest.

Love is different. It is obviously more generally distributed than the gifts specific to the tasks of apostleship, prophecy, teaching, miracle-working, healing, helping, administering and speaking in tongues (12:28). Joined in a triad with faith and

hope, love is ranked far above any spiritual gifts that enable individuals to perform specific tasks. Since faith, hope and love are universally bestowed upon Christians, the gifts for leadership are therefore of a comparatively inferior order -- beautiful in themselves, but paling before the pre-eminent triad. This is consistent with the over-arching theme of leadership as servanthood that we have seen elsewhere.

Another significant passage is 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13: "...respect those who labor among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work." While this may at first seem to justify a hierarchy of church offices, a closer look reveals a de-emphasis on the person of the leader that is consistent with the rest of the Pauline theology of ministry. Leaders are not to be esteemed because of their persons, but "because of their work." The task, in other words, creates the commission: not the other way around.

This is particularly clear in the famous passage from Philippians in which Paul recites his impressive credentials as a spiritual leader but then negates them, counting them "as rubbish" because of what Christ has done:

> Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ. (Phil. 3:7-11)

The doctrine of justification by grace through faith that is

the cornerstone of Pauline theology in general is the cornerstone of the Pauline theology of ministry as well. Credentials and talents that would be cause for boasting in any secular setting are "as rubbish" to the faithful Christian leader (and, indeed, to all Christians). That is because, according to the upside-down ethics of the kingdom of God, leaders are servants. This servant theme is easily forgotten in the church, which constantly has to fight the battle within itself of whether it belongs to the kingdom of God or the kingdom of this world.

The letter of 1 Peter is similar to the great Pauline letters in its theology of ministry. Two passages in particular are indicative of this.

In 1 Peter 4:10-11 we have a brief list of gifts, matched up with tasks to be performed in the church, that is reminiscent of the great Pauline lists in Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12:

> Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.

From this passage it is clear that gifts in the church are to be exercised for the benefit of others. Ministry is a matter of <u>stewardship</u> of spiritual gifts -- after all, stewards (<u>oikonomos</u>) do not own that with which they are entrusted, but merely care for and nurture it. Furthermore, that service can only be rendered with the help of God's grace; and all service is for the ultimate glory of God.

Later in the book, the author gives advice to elders that

exemplifies this theology of servant ministry:

> I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it -- not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock....In the same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourself with humility in your dealings toward one another..." (5:1-5).[98]

Leaders, according to the advice of the author of 1 Peter, are to lead not by domineering power, but by gentle example. Humility and mutual submission are the watchwords, and the natural submission of younger people to their elders is affirmed.[99] The fuel that powers leadership in the church of 1 Peter is meant to be humility and servanthood, not authority such as the world knows.

The themes of servanthood and humility which we see throughout the Pauline writings, and even in non-Pauline writings such as 1 Peter, are summed up admirably in one particular Pauline image: that of the ambassador (presbeuo). In 2 Corinthians 5:20 we read this affirmation: "So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is

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[98]The phrase "exercising the oversight" is a textual variant which the RSV translators choose to omit, but which the NRSV translators choose to include -- although with a footnote indicating that it is not found in some of the source documents. Even if we do include it as original, it is hard to build a theology of hierarchical authority on this passage, since the overall message is one of humility.

[99]It is interesting to speculate what manner of elders to which the author is discussing. Is it perhaps a formal ecclesiastical office, as is prevalent in the Reformed tradition? The clear reference to chronological age, however -- as advice is given to "you who are younger" -- makes this unlikely. The author is affirming the natural order of his day, and exhorting the people to humility in all things, particularly in their relationships to those older Christians whom they are to revere as leaders.

making his appeal through us..."

There are three observations we can make about the Pauline "ambassador" image, which speak to its applicability to the Pauline theology of servant ministry.

First, ambassadors by their very nature are strangers in a strange land. They are citizens of another country, living in a country not their own. That is also true of Christian leaders. If we are truly striving to live as citizens of God's kingdom, the firstfruits of which we have already seen in Christ and which is even now breaking in, we will no longer seek to order our common life according to the world's standards. The upside-down ethics of the kingdom, with servanthood for leaders and humility for those who have every cause to boast, will be the standard.

Second, ambassadors speak not for themselves, but for the ruler they represent. Any authority the Christian leader has does not belong to the leader, but to Christ. Leaders are but stewards of the gifts of leadership, given by the Holy Spirit for the upbuilding of the community.

Third, ambassadorial credentials follow the tradition not of the country in which ambassadors find themselves, but of the country they represent. The credentials for Christian leaders -- whether they are recognized in a rite such as ordination or in some other form -- are credentials that belong to the kingdom of God, not the kingdom of this world. Therefore, ordination ought not to be used to create or obtain privileges for the Christian leader in secular society. Ambassadors have no authority in the country to

which they are sent; they are in a special class, a set-apart class.[100] So when Paul speaks of himself as an ambassador, it is not to claim privileges for himself, but rather to emphasize the utter servanthood and even risk he has taken on, for the sake of Christ and for the upbuilding of the church.

There is one sense, however, in which the ambassador analogy is less than adequate down when it comes to Christian ministry. Worldly ambassadors represent their lords and speak for them when the lords are not present; Christian ministers represent a Lord who is present beside them as they do ministry. This is clear throughout the Pauline writings, as the active presence of the Spirit in bestowing gifts and empowering leaders is emphasized again and again.

The ambassador analogy, then -- with this one corrective -- beautifully sums up the Pauline conception of ministry as servanthood. Throughout his writings, Paul takes scrupulous care to avoid the implication that his role as apostle is in any sense an office. Instead, he sees it as a vital, dynamic function to be carried out in the church, and himself as one who has been chosen and gifted by the Holy Spirit to do so.

The chief characteristic of ministry, not only in the Pauline writings but throughout the New Testament, is servanthood. A biblical theology of ministry will necessarily emphasize this

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[100]In some cases, ambassadors were even subject to particular danger from the society in which they immersed themselves; "killing the messenger" who brings bad news is only an expression today, but in the Roman Empire it was a distinct memory if not present reality.

servant aspect, and will de-emphasize the view of ministry as an office that in any sense belongs to a person, or which is based, in its essential nature, on any credentials other than the gifts of the Spirit.

CONCLUSION

Our search for a single, definitive biblical model for ministerial office has been largely inconclusive. While there was surely ministry being done in biblical communities, there is virtually no consensus as to what institutional form that ministry took. Ministry just is; it is a function to be performed, a task to be fulfilled. There is little conclusive biblical guidance as to how the church ought to identify and equip those who will do ministry.

Murdo MacDonald describes the situation as follows:

> The truth is that at the moment the "quest for the historical ministry" seems as hopeless as the quest for the historical Jesus. Any attempt to establish a definite ministerial structure is not likely to meet with much success. Whatever the truth about ordination, the ministry of the Church engaged in mission must have a measure of flexibility and healthy untidiness to allow for development and adaptation within the overall pattern.[101]

We have seen how the Old Testament describes a number of installation-events for leaders that may be regarded as proto-ordinations; yet there is sufficient variety among them to resist any attempt to use them as models for modern practice. The

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[101]Murdo Ewen MacDonald, The Call to Communicate (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1975), p. 179.

rite of the laying on of hands itself is not limited to these proto-ordinations; it is rather a rite used generally to impart spiritual power: in blessing, cursing or atonement as well as in commissioning for leadership.

In our survey of ministry in the New Testament, we have discovered a variety of models of ministerial order, specific to the circumstances of each of the New Testament communities. With the exception of Matthew 16:18 (a statement of doubtful authenticity), Jesus has nothing to say about an institutional church at all -- although he does have much to say to his disciples about servanthood. Paul's ministerial order is charismatic and corporate, Luke's is apostolic and tradition-minded, John's is Christologically constituted, and that of the letter to the Hebrews is anti-institutional. Only the pastorals demonstrate a ministerial order with a degree of organization appropriate to a church that is more than an interim eschatological community -- and that is because the pastorals are documents of the second-generation church.

Turning to theological concepts, we have seen how the themes of servanthood and humility are sounded again and again throughout the New Testament any time ecclesiastical leadership is mentioned; Jesus, Paul and others steadfastly resist using their personal authority to provide a foundation for an official ministry. This downward mobility toward servant ministry runs counter to the church's subsequent efforts to establish orders of ministry, and to institute ordination as a gateway to kerygmatic teaching authority.

Yet while this motion does in some sense run counter to the modern Reformed understanding of ordination, it does not exclude it either. The lack of explicit biblical grounding for ordination indicates that the need for ministerial order in the church did not arise until after the first generation or two of Christians -- when the church, realizing that the parousia was not coming soon, began to settle down to the business of ordering its institutional life. As R.P.C. Hanson points out, "all students of the subject admit that the critical point for the development of ministry as an office occurred in the second rather than the first century."[102]

What the biblical record does demonstrate, however -- and which the church ignores at the risk of proving unfaithful to the essential proclamation of its own faith -- is that leadership in the church must be servant leadership. This raises definite problems for the doctrine of ordination, which, more than many other doctrines, is particularly vulnerable to institutionalism.

If ordination is to be used in the church to set apart those who will become leaders, it needs somehow to demonstrate that leadership is intrinsically a yoke of servanthood rather than a scepter of power. Such a doctrine needs to bear witness that, in Jesus' words, the great leaders are those who are servants (Matthew 20:26). It needs to encourage leaders to live out in their own lives the humility of Paul, counting everything (and presumably also their status as leaders) "...as loss because of the surpassing

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[102]"Office and the Concept of Office in the Early Church," in Studies in Christian Antiquity (Edinburgh: 1985), p. 120.

value of knowing Christ Jesus [as] Lord" (Philippians 3:8). Such leaders according to the biblical model need to see competence as coming from God, not themselves (2 Corinthians 3:4-6); and to see grace made perfect not in strength, but in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

In short, because ordination establishes men and women in authority over others, it is subject to all the abuses of power that may prevail in any human institution. Yet if the church is to be in any sense a community in which the life of God's kingdom is lived out, this vital doctrine must be understood as belonging to the upside-down ethics of that kingdom, rather than to the institutional structures of the principalities and powers of this world.

CHAPTER 2: THE EVOLUTION OF THE THREEFOLD PATTERN OF MINISTRY

As we have seen, there was no universal pattern of ministerial order in the churches of the New Testament. The New Testament books bear witness to a number of different patterns, each one designed to meet the needs and express the theological understandings of its own community.

Soon after the New Testament period, however, a consensus did begin to develop in many areas of the church. This consensus centered around the "threefold pattern" of bishop, presbyter, and deacon. In this chapter we will survey the rise of this pattern of ministry in the second and third centuries, and will briefly note the changes and developments it underwent in subsequent centuries, until the time of the Protestant reformers.

Since, as R.P.C. Hanson has noted, "the critical point for the development of ministry as an office occurred in the second rather than the first century," we will devote the greatest attention to that time period.[103] We will note only in passing developments in the threefold pattern from the time of recognition of Christianity by the Roman Empire until the reformation. We will also be unable to deal with the exceptions to the threefold pattern as it developed in the Western church, such as the Eastern tradition of

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[103]"Office and the Concept of Office in the Early Church," in Studies in Christian Antiquity, p. 120.

autocephalous bishops.[104] This is as it should be, however, because our interest is Reformed ministerial order, and the reformers were reacting against the threefold pattern as it had become established in the West. Not only that, Calvin relied heavily on the second- and third-century church fathers in composing his Genevan ministerial order. Although he reacted against what the threefold pattern had become by his own day, Calvin did not object to it as such, and in some ways adapted it to his own purposes. We will consider his views on this question more fully in Chapter Three.

In the present chapter, we will first consider the Didaché, that anonymous document of the end of the first century that is so revealing of church practice in Syria. Following that, we will look at the writings of Clement of Rome, which demonstrate something of the practice of the Roman and Corinthian churches at about the same period or a little later. We will next examine the changes made by Ignatius of Antioch, who about 120 A.D. first instituted the threefold pattern in his local area. Then we will turn to Cyprian, who in North Africa at the middle of the Third Century developed the office of bishop into the center of the church's unity.

After we have examined these materials, we will briefly note some other important developments of these two centuries. Finally,

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[104] For more on these topics, see Eric G. Jay, The Church: Its Changing Image Through Twenty Centuries, vol. 1 (London: SPCK, 1977). See also Kenneth S. Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper & Row, 1975).

we will review in a very rudimentary fashion some of the general developments befalling these three church offices in the centuries between this formative period and the time of the reformers.

The Didaché

The Didaché, or The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, is roughly contemporaneous with some of the later writings of the New Testament, although it never was granted canonical status.[105] It shows us yet another local church situation, that of the church in Syria. The Didaché is especially important for our study, because it explains in greater detail than any of the canonical books the particular form ministerial order took in its own locale.

In the Didaché, it is the community as a whole that is the primary decision-making body. Like many of the later New Testament churches, the problem of false teachers is a serious one for this community; an unstructured, town-meeting style of decision-making lends itself to domination by the loudest, most persistent voices.

The advice of the author is to revere those who teach the word:

> My child, him that speaketh to thee the word of God remember night and day; and thou shalt honour him as the Lord; for in the place whence Lordly rule is uttered, there is the Lord.[106]

The response of the author to this problem is to urge the

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[105]J.W.C. Wand, A History of the Early Church to A.D. 500 (London: Methuen, 1963, fourth edition), p. 24.

[106]The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles 4:1-2, in The Anti-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. VII (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), p. 378.

people to test the spirits, so as to discern false teachers:

> But if the teacher himself turn and teach another doctrine to the destruction of this, hear him not; but if he teach so as to increase righteousness and the knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord....And every prophet that speaketh in the Spirit ye shall neither try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this sin shall not be forgiven. But not every one that speaketh in the Spirit is a prophet; but only if he hold the ways of the Lord. Therefore from their ways shall the false prophet and the prophet be known.[107]

It is significant that the whole community is called upon to perform this testing. Although there are church officials called "bishops," there is no implication that they have special responsibility to evaluate those who teach. Indeed, the idea of a monarchical bishop is quite foreign to the thought of the Didaché, which emphasizes charismatic rule in the church and sees order only as a support for this charismatic way of operating.[108]

For the church of the Didaché, the most important religious figure is the prophet or apostle, either wandering or resident. These individuals speak with great authority, especially when prophesying from a state of charismatic ecstasy. Yet over and

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[107]The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles 11:2-8, p. 380. The author is nothing if not practical; some of the particular tests believers may apply when a new travelling apostle comes to town include: "Let every apostle that cometh to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain except one day; but if there be need, also the next; but if he remain three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goeth away, let him take nothing but bread until he lodgeth; but if he ask money, he is a false prophet....But whoever saith in the Spirit, give me money, or something else, ye shall not listen to him; but if he saith to you to give for others' sake who are in need, let no one judge him" (pp. 380-381).

[108] Burke, Patrick, "The Monarchical Episcopate At the End of the First Century," in Journal of Ecumenical Studies, vol. 7, Summer 1970, p. 513.

against this charismatic authority are the holders of various offices -- whose authority the author clearly prefers to the itinerant prophets, who are accountable to no one but the Spirit. The author still recognizes the validity of charismatic authority in the church, but is clearly beginning to move toward a more settled form of institutional authority, one which is better equipped to deal with the problem of false teaching.

Functioning as a substitute for the prophets, in their absence, are the "bishops" -- a council which has authority to rule as a body.[109] There is also a body of deacons, who assist the bishops, and there are a number of teachers who work under the authority of the council of bishops.[110] The authority of the bishops, however, is far from absolute; the wandering prophets apparently still have the power to do whatever they want, and are permitted to celebrate the Eucharist on their own authority.[111] Thus, the Didaché has only two institutional ministries -- bishops (or presbyters) and deacons -- and these ministries are themselves still very much in the process of development. The church of the Didaché straddles the boundary-line between the apostolic and sub-apostolic periods; travelling apostolic figures still have great authority, but their influence is waning in favor of the emerging

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[109] The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, 15:1-2, p. 381. Since this is a collective episcopate, it is perhaps more accurate to translate episkopos, here, as "overseer," to avoid any hint of monarchical authority.

[110] Schweizer, pp. 142ff.

[111] The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, 10:7, p. 380.

bishops.

First Clement

Clement of Rome's First Letter to the Corinthians, written from Rome to the Corinthian church in about 96 A.D., is illuminating with regard both to the church in Rome and the church in Corinth. The primary concern of the letter is the recent removal from office of certain presbyters in the Corinthian church, "men of excellent behaviour...[who] fulfilled blamelessly and with honour" the duties of ministry, and their replacement by a party of younger men.[112]

The issue is the proper length of tenure for church officeholders. Clement is firmly of the opinion that church office ought to be for life:

> Our apostles also knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife on account of the office of the episcopate. For this reason, therefore, inasmuch as they had obtained a perfect fore-knowledge of this, they appointed those [ministers] already mentioned, and afterwards gave them instructions, that when these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed them in their ministry....For our sin will not be small if we eject from the episcopate those who have blamelessly and holily fulfilled their duties.[113]

First Clement is a letter of protest, written by the presiding

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[112]Clement of Rome, First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians 44, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1885), p. 17.

[113]1 Clement 44, p. 17. Clement is clearly speaking about more than one "bishop" or overseer here; the church to which he is writing, like the church of the Didaché, is evidently governed by a shared ministry.

leader of one church to the whole membership of another.[114] The authority Clement wields in this letter is hortative, not monarchical; although he is a bishop in Rome, in no sense is he functioning as an early pope.

The principal theme of First Clement is the validity of ministries and the authority of officeholders. Clement recognizes a certain succession of authority: first from God through Christ, then through apostles, bishops and deacons -- although this list is not to be regarded in any sense as an official chain of command.[115]

Clement demonstrates an emerging conception of office; the two offices clearly present in his church are bishops (or presbyters) and deacons, just as in the Didaché. He detects precedents for these offices in the Old Testament as well as the New -- unfortunately, a case of reading his own ministerial order back into the biblical record.[116] Clement uses the word for bishop interchangeably with the word for presbyter -- suggesting that the two are at this early date one office, and that it was only later

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[114]Henry Chadwick, The Early Church (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1967), pp. 41-42. See also von Campenhausen, pp. 87ff.

[115]1 Clement 42, p. 16.

[116]1 Clement 42-44, pp. 16-17. This is not the only example of Clement using dubious exegesis to justify his ministerial order. At the end of chapter 42, he quotes Isaiah 60:17, "I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith"; the NRSV renders this verse, "I will appoint Peace as your overseer and Righteousness as your taskmaster."

that they were differentiated into two.[117] Clement himself was probably one of the leading members of a group of Roman "presbyter-bishops" who governed the church there, and was the one who took responsibility for expressing their common concern to the Corinthians.[118]

Clement urges the Corinthians to submit themselves to their duly installed church leaders, for that is part of the divine plan.[119] They are to emulate the organization of the military, with its higher and lower ranks.[120] Yet despite his admiration for the military chain of command, Clement's letter appeals to the whole church, not to designated leaders; the decision-making authority is in the hands of the gathered community, not a select few who occupy positions at the top of a hierarchy.[121] Like the

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[117] Examples of the interchangeable use of these terms are 1 Clement 1, 21, 44 and 47. See also Schweizer, pp. 146-149; Anthony T. Hanson, p. 110; and Chadwick, p. 46.

[118] Burke, p. 507.

[119] 1 Clement 1, p. 5; 3, pp. 5-6; 21, p. 11; 44, p. 17; and 57, p. 20. "Submit yourselves to the presbyters, and receive correction so as to repent, bending the knees of your hearts. Learn to be subject, laying aside the proud and arrogant self-confidence of your tongue. For it is better for you that ye should occupy a humble but honourable place in the flock of Christ, than that, being highly exalted, ye should be cast out from the hope of his people" (57).

[120] 1 Clement 37, p. 15: "Let us then...with all energy act the part of soldiers....Let us consider those we serve under our generals....All are not prefects, nor commanders of a hundred, nor of a thousand, nor of a hundred, nor of fifty, or the like, but each one in his own rank performs the things commanded by the king and the generals."

[121] Schweizer (pp. 146-149) observes that First Clement includes the first reference to majority rule in the church. Earlier decisions had apparently been made by consensus.

author of the Didaché, Clement is a transitional figure; in his writings we can observe a new form of church government being born.

Ignatius of Antioch

Although the Didaché and Clement of Rome refer to offices with familiar names, we must be wary of assuming that they are in any way similar to contemporary church offices of the same name. It was not until Ignatius of Antioch that the threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter, and deacon was given full theological expression. Ignatius himself was the leading teacher of the historic and influential church in Antioch; he wrote his various epistles around 120 A.D.

Ignatius was facing the same problem the author of Didaché faced, but a generation or so later -- the problem of how to maintain true doctrine in the face of false teaching. Rather than advising the people to "test the spirits" as they listen to the itinerant prophets, Ignatius sets up a pattern of interrelated offices in which authority is clearly vested.

Ignatius recognizes a gradation of three offices. At the top is a single bishop, who is the repository -- at least symbolically -- of all authority in the church. Surrounding and assisting the bishop is a college of presbyters and deacons.[122] Elders are

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[122]Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Philadelphians 4 and 7, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), p. 81 and p. 83; Epistle to the Smyrnaens 12, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, p. 92; Epistle to Polycarp 6, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, p. 95. The above-mentioned passage from Ignatius' letter to the Smyrnaens clearly shows the hierarchy that has by now developed, as Ignatius

subordinate to the bishop, and deacons defer in turn to both the bishop and the elders.[123] The bishop, in the churches of Ignatius' letters, is something like a metropolitan, exercising authority over Christians in a major city and its environs.[124]

Ignatius is concerned above all with maintaining unity in the face of heresy. His response to the problem is to identify the bishop as the center of church unity, embodying within his very person the essence of the church:

> Keep yourself, then, from those evil plants which Jesus Christ does not tend...because they are not the planting of the Father, but the seed of the wicked one. Not that I have found any division among you do I write these things; but I arm you beforehand, as the children of God. For as many as are of Christ are also with the bishop; but as many as fall away from him, and embrace communion with the accursed, these shall be cut off along with them.[125]

Ignatius goes even further in writing to the Ephesians,

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ritualistically ends his letter by greeting the Smyrnaen ecclesiastical officials in order of priority: "I salute your most worthy bishop Polycarp, and your venerable presbytery, and your Christ-bearing deacons, my fellow-servants, and all of you individually, as well as generally, in the name of Jesus Christ..."

[123]In this passage from the Epistle to the Magnesians 2, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, p. 59, Ignatius could not express his notion of hierarchy more clearly, as he makes clear to a certain deacon Sotio where he stands in the universe: "Since then I have had the privilege of seeing you, through Damas your most worthy bishop, and through your worthy presbyters Bassus and Apollonius, and through my fellow-servant the deacon Sotio, whose friendship may I ever enjoy, inasmuch as he is subject to the bishop as to the grace of God, and to the presbytery as to the law of Jesus Christ..." See also Ignatius' Epistle to the Trallians 12, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, p. 72.

[124]Schweizer, p. 154.

[125]Philadelphians 3, p. 80.

equating the bishop with Christ himself:

> For we ought to receive every one whom the Master of the house sends to be over his household, as we would do to Him that sent him. It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop even as we would look on the Lord himself, standing, as he does, before the Lord.[126]

No one is to do anything in the church without the authority of the bishop.[127] No longer are wandering ascetics to be highly regarded, as they were in the church of the Didaché -- no ascetic, Ignatius warns, is to "seek to be more prominent than the bishop."[128] Ignatius thus answers the problem of false teachers by setting apart a single bishop as the source of authority; he may have been the first in the history of the church to do so.

Surrounding the bishop, in Ignatius' scheme, are presbyters and deacons. No longer are the terms "bishops" and "presbyters" synonymous; the presbyters have taken on a distinctly subordinate role, as assistants to the bishop. Yet the presbyters in Ignatius' scheme do retain one remnant of their previous importance: they are seen as the vehicle for the transmission of the church's apostolicity. The word apostolikos ("apostolic") occurs for the first time in the writings of Ignatius -- it is not found at all in

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[126]Ephesians 6, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, p. 51. The spiritual authority of the bishop is a common theme in Ignatius' letters. See also Ephesians 5, p. 51; Magnesians 3, p. 60; 6, p. 61; 7, p. 62; 13, p. 64; Polycarp 6, p. 100; Trallians 2, pp. 66-67; 3, p. 67; 7, p. 69; Smyrnaeans 9, p. 90; Philadelphians 1, p. 79; 7, p. 83.

[127]Smyrnaeans 8, pp. 89-90. See also various passages cited in the previous note.

[128]Polycarp 5, p. 95.

the New Testament, nor in earlier patristic writings.[129]

As strongly as Ignatius emphasizes the orderly transmission of apostolic authority, it is significant that for him it is the presbyters -- not the bishop -- who are the guardians of this process of transmission.

Deacons, for Ignatius, are subordinate to both elders and bishop, and carry out the specialized functions of overseeing the church's aid to the poor and engaging in ministries of sympathy and service.

It must be noted that this threefold pattern of ministry would have looked very different in the Ignatian churches than it would in a contemporary Roman Catholic or Episcopal church. So small are these churches that the bishop is the only one who needs to be authorized to lead worship and celebrate the sacraments. Ignatius expects the bishop to know all church members personally.[130] The Ignatian bishop is, in fact, closer in function to the modern parish minister or priest than to the modern diocesan bishop.

There is also no evidence that Ignatius' threefold pattern was at all widespread in the church of his day; in fact, it seems to have been confined to Asia Minor. Ignatius' Epistle to the Romans,

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[129]Arnold Ehrhardt, The Apostolic Ministry, Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Paper no. 7 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1958), pp. 3-4. It is highly significant that this view of apostolic succession -- one of the earliest in church history -- depends on the presbyters rather than the bishops. Apostolic succession through episcopal ordination was a later development. See also Magnesians 6, p. 61; Trallians 2, p. 66; Smyrnaeans 8, 89; and also T. Francis Glasson, "Second-Century Episcopacy: Its Non-Diocesan Character," in Expository Times, vol. 79, Nov. 1967, p. 53.

[130]Polycarp 4, p. 99.

for instance, makes no mention of a single presiding bishop in Rome.[131] As many times as Ignatius hammers home, in his other letters, the message of obedience to the bishop, it would have been quite extraordinary for there to have been a monarchical bishop in Rome whom the protocol-conscious Ignatius would have failed to greet or otherwise mention.[132]

Ignatius, then, provides for the first time a theological foundation for the threefold pattern of ministry; yet it appears to be a new development for his time, and one which is limited to his local area. It was not until later that this pattern spread to the rest of the church.

Where it existed in Ignatius' day, the threefold pattern was quite different from episcopal church government as we know it today. The bishop performed most of the functions we would ordinarily associate with the parish minister. It can hardly be claimed that the threefold pattern has its origins any earlier than Ignatius, and even then it was quite different from what it would later become.

Cyprian

Cyprian of Carthage, writing in the middle of the third century, seals Ignatius' emphasis on monarchical episcopacy,

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[131] Epistle to the Romans, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, pp. 73-78.

[132] Burke, p. 508. See also John Knox, "The Ministry in the Primitive Church," in H.R. Niebuhr and D.D. Williams, ed., The Ministry in Historical Perspectives (New York: Harper, 1956), p. 23.

ascribing even greater authority to the bishop. While Ignatius views the bishop's role as primarily liturgical, Cyprian adds governmental and pastoral functions. It is Cyprian, more than any other patristic writer, who gave episcopacy the distinctive form it has today.

Cyprian lived and worked during a time of great instability in the church. Persecution, heresy, and plague formed the context for his writings on ministerial order. Cyprian lived during both the Decian persecution and the Novationist heresy; he died a martyr's death in 258 A.D. His response to the turmoil of his age is to seek a strong hierarchical structure for the church, centered around an authoritative episcopate. Like Ignatius, Cyprian sees the episcopate as the fount of the church's unity -- quite simply, anyone who is not with the local bishop is not with the church.[133]

In his treatise On the Unity of the Church, Cyprian excludes from salvation any who do not submit themselves to the authority of a bishop:

> And this unity we ought firmly to hold and assert, especially those of us that are bishops who preside in the church, that we may also prove the episcopate itself to be one and undivided. Let no one deceive the brotherhood by a falsehood: let no one corrupt the truth of the faith by perfidious prevarication. The episcopate is one, each part of which is held by each one for the whole. The Church also is one, which is spread abroad far and wide into a multitude by an increase of fruitfulness. As there are many rays of the sun, but one light; and many branches of a tree, but one strength

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[133]Cyprian, Epistle 66, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. V, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), p. 368. See also von Campenhausen, p. 269, and E.W. Fasholé-Luke, "Christian Unity: St. Cyprian's and Ours," in Scottish Journal of Theology, vol. 23, Aug. 1970, p. 314.

> based in its tenacious root; and since from one spring flow many streams...yet the unity is still preserved in the source.[134]

Yet it is also clear from Cyprian's writings that, like Ignatius, he is unfamiliar with the sort of bishop who rules over a diocese in a monarchical fashion. For Cyprian, it is a fundamental principle that the bishop never stands alone. The bishop is the focus of the church's unity, it is true, but that unity springs from the covenant among "the body of priests...joined together by the bond of mutual concord, and the link of unity."[135] Episcopacy is to be exercised in solidarity with the whole body of other bishops, the collegium episcoporum.

The following excerpt from one of Cyprian's letters may be taken as a case study, demonstrating the individual freedom and the collegial responsibility pertaining to the office of bishop. Here we can glimpse how the Cyprianic church goes about a process of decision-making. The question at hand is whether or not repentant adulterers may receive absolution:

> And, indeed, among our predecessors, some of the bishops here in our province thought that peace was not to be granted to adulterers, and wholly closed the gate of repentance against adultery. Still they did not withdraw from the assembly of their co-bishops, nor break the unity of the Catholic Church by the persistency of their severity or censure; so that, because by some peace was granted to adulterers, he who did not grant it should be separated from the Church. While the bond of concord

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[134]On the Unity of the Church 5, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. V, pp. 422-423. Calvin quotes this passage with approval in Institutes IV.2.6 -- although he takes Cyprian to be referring to Christ's rule over the church when he speaks of the "episcopate" that is "one."

[135]Epistle 66, 3, p. 368. See also Epistle 14, 3, p. 295.

> remains, and the undivided sacrament of the Catholic Church endures, every bishop disposes and directs his own acts, and will have to give an account of his purposes to the Lord.[136]

Cyprian does not recognize Roman primacy; each bishop is free to act alone, and among bishops there is not even so much as a majority vote for collective action -- only consensus.[137] The church's unity, for him, is based on the gathering together of bishops into councils.[138] Cyprian is neither papalist nor conciliarist -- he is something in between, for he is writing in an era when these terms do not have their present-day meanings.[139]

Cyprian identifies two principal episcopal duties: teaching and pronouncing absolution. Other liturgical duties are important, but are not so pre-eminent as these.[140] Cyprian's heightened emphasis on teaching and absolution is a result of the unique pressures of his age. In the face of heresy in general, clear

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[136] Epistle 51, 21, p. 332.

[137] Von Campenhausen, pp. 273ff.

[138] As Fasholé-Luke observes (p. 317), this was one of the features of Cyprian's thought that Calvin admired most -- he saw the Cyprianic episcopal council as an early predecessor of the presbytery. Calvin, in the Institutes IV.11.6, n. 11, cites Epistle 14, p. 295, in which Cyprian speaks of reserving a decision on an important matter until "several bishops shall have begun to assemble into one place, [and] we may be able to arrange and reform everything." See also Epistle 17, p. 297, in which Cyprian speaks of deferring decisions on "the cases of individuals" until the college of bishops is able to gather.

[139] Von Campenhausen, pp. 278-279.

[140] Von Campenhausen, pp. 281-283. In Epistle 51, 14, Cyprian refers to Christians learning from "the discourse of the bishop." It is no wonder, in light of this, that Calvin relies so heavily on Cyprian in the Institutes.

teaching authority is always important; and in the face of the Novationist heresy in particular (with its preoccupation with personal holiness), the power of absolution is a crucial one.

Cyprian still recognizes the right of the congregation to elect its own bishop, but already he is on the way to limiting this congregational prerogative. Bishops from neighboring areas now join local presbyters in selecting a new bishop; the only way the people now participate in this process is by offering their acclamation to the candidate who has already been chosen. While in principle the decision still rests with the people, in practice the other clergy have a determining role.[141]

Thus, by the time of Cyprian a distinction has arisen between church and ministry. Clerical office -- as an order essential to the very being of the church -- is now a meaningful term, where it had not been so before. Cyprian sees the clergy as having their own historic succession of apostolic authority, independent of the church at large. The inevitable consequence of this view -- a consequence that was to be worked out in subsequent generations -- is a doctrine of apostolic succession by the laying on of hands, with the accompanying danger of sacerdotalism.[142]

Other Patristic Writers

In Cyprian's writings, produced in an age of persecution and

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[141] Von Campenhausen, p. 273. In Epistle 55, 4, Cyprian reassures the people of Thibaris, facing persecution, that they will once again hear "the bishops discoursing."

[142] Anthony T. Hanson, p. 118.

heresy, we see the barest outline of the pattern of ministerial order which the church was ultimately to adopt. Yet even in Cyprian's own time this view of ministry was hardly universal.

Origen, for example, writing at roughly the same time, describes a ministerial order that is much less structured. For Origen, ministerial authority is spiritual rather than official -- he exhibits a gnostic rather than a hierarchical self-consciousness, attributing authority in the church to inspired teaching rather than to occupants of particular offices.[143] The fact that Origen is writing in the comparatively more tolerant and heterodox East surely has an effect on his ministerial order; although with the official recognition of Christianity by the Empire, it would become inevitable that the Western hierarchical pattern would predominate.

It was Irenaeus who contributed the distinctive doctrine of apostolic succession, which developed out of orthodoxy's response to the gnostic threat. The tension between wandering prophetic teachers and resident church leaders called for some way of distinguishing true teaching from falsehood. Irenaeus, Arnold Ehrhardt writes, "produced the authoritative definition of the apostolic succession for the Western Church, employing the episcopal succession for the proof of the genuineness of the apostolic writings, because it was greatly superior to that capricious, erratic 'charismatic' succession of the [wandering]

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[143]Von Campenhausen, p. 265.

prophets with all its attendant dangers."[144]

Irenaeus' response to various heresies is to appeal to the authority of the bishop, which -- in his view -- can be traced directly back to the apostles. Of all the churches whose bishops claim a place in this succession, Rome enjoys a special priority:

> ...we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner...assemble in unauthorized meetings by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its pre-eminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere.[145]

Several other developments of this era are worth noting. The first of these is the common identity at this time of two of the three principal church offices: presbyter and bishop. In the early centuries of the church, these offices were often regarded as one. It is only with Ignatius and Cyprian that the office of bishop

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[144]The Apostolic Succession in the First Two Centuries of the Church (London: Lutterworth, 1953), p. 108.

[145]Against Heresies, III.3, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. I, pp. 415-416. As Ehrhardt points out, however, Irenaeus is not placing teaching authority in the hands of the bishop of Rome, but rather in the Roman church; the succession of bishops is not for him an instrumental means by which teaching authority is handed down through manumission, but is rather a symbol of the true doctrine which the assembled presbyters and bishop at Rome teach (The Apostolic Succession, p. 119, n.2). In the next chapter, Irenaeus refers to the Roman church, not the bishop, as like a bank, in which "a rich man [depositing his money]...lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life" (III.4). It is the Roman church that has this teaching authority, not the Roman bishop per se.

becomes distinct.

We have seen hints of this common identification of the two offices in the later books of the New Testament, where the words for presbyter and bishop are often used interchangeably (1 Tim. 3, Phil. 1:1). The same is true of the Didaché and First Clement. In the early centuries of the church, the office of bishop (common to some of the churches) and the office of presbyter (common to others of the churches) were conflated into one. It appears that in many second- and third-century churches, episkopos was an official title for one or more members of a council of presbyters.[146] This oversight-role included leading worship, celebrating the sacraments, and offering prayers. Thus, all bishops would have been presbyters, but not all presbyters bishops.[147] By the time of Ignatius and Cyprian, however -- a time when a more authoritative office was needed to cope with heresy, persecution, and false teaching -- the bishop had been made distinct from the presbyters, and the presbyters had been relegated to a subordinate role.

Another development of these early centuries was the gradual emergence of what was later to become the penitential system. As the church struggled against heresy, it also began to experience the return of repentant heretics to the fold. With the returning heretics came disagreements among those who had remained, as to

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[146]Arnold Ehrhardt, The Apostolic Succession, p. 112, observes that even later than this, in the days of Irenaeus, "things were in a fluid state at that time, and the title of presbyteros and in particular of episcopos were less clearly defined than they are now."

[147]Von Campenhausen, pp. 84-85.

what standards ought to be followed for readmission to the fellowship. Some system of discipline became necessary. The church turned to the biblical empowering of the disciples to "bind and loose," and applied this authority to its leaders.

The second century saw the gradual rise of a sacrificial, penitential emphasis attached to the Lord's Supper. Beginning in the West and moving soon after to the East, the place of eucharistic celebration became an altar rather than a table, with the emphasis placed on Christ's atoning sacrifice rather than on a fellowship meal.[148] Although the formal priestly power to absolve sins was not to be articulated until much later, we can already see in this early sacrificial emphasis the forerunner of the medieval penitential system to which the Reformers were to object so vigorously.[149]

Coupled with this was an emerging cultic sense of priesthood. Certain church officials acquired powers similar to those of the high priest of Judaism. Hippolytus of Rome, for example, speaks of himself and his colleagues as "participators in this grace, high-priesthood, and office of teaching" of the apostles.[150] At the Councils of Arles (314 A.D.) and Nicaea (325 A.D.), authority to celebrate the Lord's Supper was formally restricted to priests and bishops. Deacons (who had previously exercised a wide range of

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[148]B.L. Burkhardt, "The Rise of the Christian Priesthood," in Journal of Religion, vol. 22, 1942, pp. 196ff.

[149]Von Campenhausen, p. 124.

[150]The Refutation Of All Heresies, trans. J.H. MacMahon, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, vol. V, p. 10.

functions, including sacramental ones) began to be regarded as a subordinate order, one which was eventually to become little more than a stepping-stone to the priesthood.[151] As the power of the keys became more crucial to the life of the church, that power moved further up the hierarchy, to a place from which it could be controlled more effectively.

Conclusions: The Patristic Period

We discovered from our study of the Bible that there is no single scriptural ministerial order; we must draw the same conclusion about the church of the first three centuries.[152] Not until Ignatius of Antioch was there articulated in a systematic form anything resembling the threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter, and deacon; prior to that time, a variety of patterns prevailed.[153] Even in Ignatius' day the threefold pattern was not widespread; it was only with Cyprian that the threefold pattern became codified, and many of the offices' responsibilities spelled out.

Von Campenhausen identifies three different ministerial orders in the years before the official recognition of Christianity by the Empire: a Roman pattern in which the bishop is the supreme cultic

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[151]Chadwick, p. 35.

[152]See George Carey, "The Origins of the Threefold Christian Ministry," in The Churchman, vol. 96, no. 1, 1982, pp. 36-43.

[153] The churches of Rome, Corinth, Philippi, and Egypt--as Burke has shown, p. 500 -- had no monarchical episcopate in Ignatius' time.

official, a Syrian pattern in which he is the spiritual leader and example, and a pattern from Asia Minor in which he is the authoritative teacher.[154] It was only later, under the influence of Imperial centralization, that all three of these functions came to be widely identified with the office of bishop -- an office which by that time had ceased to be merely the senior presbyter and had become an office in its own right.

From Imperial State Religion To Reformation

Once Christianity was officially recognized by the Roman Empire, the responsibilities of the offices of bishop, presbyter, and deacon changed even further. Prior to this time, bishops had been performing functions we would today identify as ministerial -- proclaiming the word and celebrating the sacraments. Presbyters had been helpers of various kinds, some of them preaching or celebrating the sacraments in satellite churches outside urban areas, but always under the authority of the bishop of the metropolitan church. Deacons were charged with overseeing the distribution of material resources, and with providing pastoral care to the poor, sick and aged.

When Constantine named Christianity the state religion of the Empire, the situation of the church changed dramatically. Almost overnight, Christianity found itself not as one religion among many in a heterodox society, but as the sole religion that could rally the strength of the Empire behind it. It was not long before the

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[154]Von Campenhausen, p. 120.

church found itself comfortably established, with significant financial and property holdings. The role of bishops as chief administrative officers of the metropolitan churches took on greater importance. As bishops' financial and administrative responsibilities increased, they delegated more of the preaching, teaching, and sacramental responsibilities to presbyters. Outside the metropolitan churches that were the seat of episcopal power, presbyters came to have jurisdiction over something akin to modern parishes; there they gradually became more independent, as the bishops became increasingly preoccupied with regional administration. With this greater responsibility and authority, in an atmosphere now free of persecution, more candidates aspired to the presbyterate than ever before -- a state of affairs which resulted in a tightening of the requirements for that office.[155]

Further changes came with the collapse of the Western Empire in the fifth century. With the Imperial administrative system in a shambles, bishops became even more important than before, taking on civil and judicial roles in addition to their ecclesiastical responsibilities. The new Germanic rulers, inexperienced in the business of running a large state, turned to the bishops to supply some of the machinery of government from the church's existing administrative structures.[156] As a result, the distance between bishops and presbyters increased even further, with presbyters now

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[155]R.P.C. Hanson, Christian Priesthood Examined (London: Lutterworth, 1979), pp. 62ff.

[156]R.P.C. Hanson, Christian Priesthood Examined, pp. 72ff.

assuming regular responsibility for proclaiming the Word and celebrating the sacraments.

During the "Dark Ages" and the centuries of confusion and trouble that followed, the wealth of the church came to be concentrated in the hands of the bishops and the monastic abbots. In time, prominent families captured many of the episcopal sees, with all their wealth and lands, for their own. Only the monasteries retained some measure of independence.[157] By the time the feudal system of the Middle Ages had come onto the scene, bishops had become little more than ecclesiastical barons. The image of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, swinging a sword beside William the Conqueror in the Bayeux Tapestry, then donning ecclesiastical vestments to preside at William's coronation at Westminster, is typical of that period.[158]

The shift in responsibilities was now complete. Bishops were preoccupied with the weighty business of state; no longer were they the preachers and sacramental celebrants par excellence. That role had settled upon the presbyters, who had by now evolved into

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[157] This was especially true of the Celtic church of Ireland and Scotland, in which abbots rather than bishops were the most powerful figures. It is of this church that Bernard of Clairvaux remarked, "Almost every church must have its own separate bishop" -- quoted by G.S.M. Walker, "Scottish Ministerial Orders," in Scottish Journal of Theology, vol. 8, 1955, p. 250. For more on the Celtic church, see J.A. Duke, The Columban Church (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957), and John T. McNeill, The Celtic Churches (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 215ff.

[158] R.P.C. Hanson, Christian Priesthood Examined, pp. 76ff. See T.M. Parker's "Feudal Episcopacy," in K.E. Kirk, ed., The Apostolic Ministry (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946), pp. 351-386, for an account of the corrupt nature of the medieval episcopacy.

priests.[159] As for the diaconate, in this age when sympathy and service were dispensed by the monasteries if at all, that office had gone into decline, becoming little more than a stepping-stone to the priesthood -- effectively the most important of the "minor orders," but minor nonetheless.[160]

The threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter, and deacon -- now reinterpreted so that bishops were regional administrators, presbyters custodians of the old episcopal functions, and deacons aspirants to the presbyterate or priesthood -- was all but universal in the Western church in the Middle Ages. The leading exception to this in the West -- the Celtic church, with its powerful abbots who were both spiritual leaders and regional administrators -- had by this time been virtually absorbed. In the East, too, the trend toward placing more administrative authority in the hands of the bishops had been all but irresistible -- although the Eastern church preserved more episcopal autonomy by refusing to recognize Roman primacy and by holding onto its tradition of autocephalous bishops.

In the late Middle Ages, the priesthood gained in prominence.

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[159] The trend toward transferring more of the cultic responsibility to the presbyters was paralleled theologically by the development of eucharistic doctrine, such that an increasing amount of salvific importance came to be placed on what the presbyters -- now priests -- did during the Mass. By the time of the Lateran Council of 1215, this development had become permanently enshrined in the doctrine of transubstantiation. See R.P.C. Hanson, Christian Priesthood Examined, p. 79.

[160] An account of the rise of the minor orders, while an interesting subject, is beyond the scope of this study. For a brief account, see Margaret Deanesly, A History of the Medieval Church, 590-1500 (London: Methuen, 1969, ninth edition), pp. 29ff.

As eucharistic doctrine achieved central importance in ecclesiology, the conception of the distinct role of the bishop actually diminished. The cultic functions -- long since discarded by the bishops in favor of administrative responsibilities -- elevated the priesthood to new importance. This trend was encouraged by the growing power of the papacy, which could only have stood to gain from a diminished role for bishops. As a result, as R.P.C. Hanson has pointed out, "the bishop at the end of the Middle Ages found himself reduced, so to speak, theologically while he was exalted socially and politically."[161]

By the time of the Protestant Reformers, therefore, the threefold pattern of ministry had undergone a considerable shift in emphasis. First, the liturgical and pastoral functions of the bishops had been passed to the presbyters. Then, as theology had come more and more to emphasize soteriology and the penitential system had taken center stage in popular devotion, presbyters -- now priests -- had increased in importance, absorbing what diaconal functions remained. The bishops, beset on one side by a politically powerful papacy and on the other by a sacerdotally powerful priesthood, settled into a comfortable role as the ecclesiastical counterparts of feudal lords. The deacons had by this time long since become a subordinate order. By the late Middle Ages, the threefold pattern had thus evolved into something quite different from the ministerial order of Ignatius and Cyprian -- and even further removed from the purity of the New Testament

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[161]R.P.C. Hanson, Christian Priesthood Examined, p. 81.

concept of church leadership as diakonia.

This was the situation to which the Reformers were reacting. In the next chapter, we will consider how John Calvin, following Martin Luther's lead, recast ministerial order in an attempt to recover what he believed to be the pattern of the apostolic church.

CHAPTER 3: LUTHER AND CALVIN ON ORDINATION

It is generally acknowledged that the Protestant reformers did not set out -- at least not initially -- to found a new church.[162] As Martin Luther nailed his "Ninety-Five Theses" to the church door at Wittenburg, he considered himself a loyal, if dissenting, member of his religious order. Calvin, for his part, never intended to settle in Geneva and establish a new church and social order, but was constrained by Farel to linger as he was fleeing through the city. Consequently, the first-generation church order of both the Lutheran and Calvinist reforms, created as it was amidst a crucible of change, demonstrates something of the same ad hoc quality as that of the first-century church.

In order to understand the Calvinist ministerial reforms, it is necessary first to set the stage by sketching the broad outlines of the Lutheran reform of a half-generation earlier. For this reason, we will begin this chapter with a brief look at Luther's writings on ordination, which were well-known to Calvin.

Luther is particularly noteworthy for our study because, by returning to the radically simplified notion of ministry as service of the word, he sliced through the Gordian knot of the entrenched Roman system of ecclesiastical offices, revealing the all-but-

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[162]In fact, as John T. McNeill points out, "In repudiating Rome, Luther meant to indicate not his own but Rome's exclusion from the catholic Church" -- Unitive Protestantism (New York: Abingdon: 1930), p. 64.

obscured foundation of diakonia. Following our brief sojourn into Lutheran ecclesiology, we will devote the greater part of our attention to Calvin.[163]

Luther on Ordination

Martin Luther was an Augustinian monk, and as such could not have been unfamiliar with the ordination theology of the founder of his order. Augustine had formulated his doctrine of ordination in the midst of the Donatist controversy; he was eager to maintain the validity of the sacrament of baptism, even in situations in which the priest celebrating the sacrament was corrupt.

In response to this situation, Augustine developed the doctrine of the "indelible mark" (in Latin, character indelibilis). According to this view, ordination (and baptism also, for that matter) conveys upon the recipient an indelible mark, similar to that of the "mark" or "brand" (nota) applied to rank-and-file soldiers in the Roman Empire, as a sign of the service to which they had bound themselves. This mark, Augustine maintains, remains with the ordinand even in the case of malfeasance in office:

> In like manner as if there take place an ordination of clergy in order to form a congregation of people, although the congregation of people follow not, yet there remains in the ordained person the Sacrament of Ordination; and if, for any fault, any be removed from

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[163]Readers who are interested in the theology of ordination of other continental reformers may want to refer to these works by W.P Stephens: The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), pp. 173-195, The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli (Oxford: University Press, 1986), pp. 274-281, and Zwingli: An Introduction To His Thought (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

> his office, he will not be without the Sacrament of the Lord once for all set upon him, albeit continuing unto condemnation.[164]

As the centuries passed, this indelible-mark understanding of ordination came to be interpreted as conveying to the priest a higher and more holy status than that belonging to ordinary baptized Christians. This tendency was exacerbated, in the middle ages, by the common practice of ordaining men (particularly younger sons of minor nobility) to the priesthood, even though they had no intention of ever serving, nor sometimes of even visiting, the particular church that was their titular pastoral charge.[165] In such situations, ordination had become completely separated from a particular pastoral work; it was no more than a special status bestowed on an individual.

This viewpoint was later institutionalized in the Roman Catholic Church by the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which opposed the Protestant doctrine of the priesthood of all believers with the assertion that ordination conveys to the priest a spiritual "power of consecrating and offering the body and blood of the Lord and of remitting and retaining sins," a power "divinely bestowed."[166]

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[164]On the Good of Marriage, trans. C.L. Cornish, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, ed. Philip Schaff, Augustine vol. III (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), p. 412.

[165]Calvin mentions this problem in the Institutes, IV.5.11. Absentee priests were common also in pre-reformation Scotland. Ecclesiastical "benefices" (appointments to particular churches) were frequently held by members of the nobility who never set foot within the parish, but merely collected the revenues that accrued to it from church-owned agricultural lands.

[166]Chemnitz, Martin, Examination of the Council of Trent, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1978), vol. II, pp. 677, 678.

Luther came to understand the Roman doctrine of holy orders as one of the areas within the church that was most loudly crying out for reform. It was not simply the corruption of certain individual priests that troubled him; it was the theological elevation of the priestly office to a status higher than that of baptized Christians. The purpose of the ministry, in Luther's view, is that the church should have capable persons to proclaim the word. Ordination, therefore, is "nothing else than a certain rite of choosing preachers in the Church."[167] It is therefore no different from a host of other rites practiced by the church:

> I therefore admit that ordination is a certain churchly rite, on a par with many others introduced by the Church Fathers, such as the blessing of vases, houses, vestments, water, salt, candles, herbs, wine, and the like. No one calls any of these a sacrament, nor is there in them any promise. In the same manner, to anoint a man's hands with oil, or to shave his head, and the like, is not to administer a sacrament, since there is no promise given to those things; he is simply prepared, like a vessel or an instrument, for a certain work.[168]

The sole purpose of ordination is to allow necessary work to be accomplished:

> We single out a man, and through the power of the Word which we possess we give him authority to preach the word and to administer the sacraments. This is to ordain.[169]

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[167]Luther, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, trans. A.T.W. Steinhaeuser, in Works of Martin Luther, vol. II (Philadelphia: Holman, 1916), p. 279.

[168]Luther, On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church, p. 275.

[169]Luther, Werke (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1899), vol. 15, p. 721, quoted by Robert Clyde Johnson, "The Reformation and the Ministry," paper appended to The Church and Its Changing Ministry, Study Material Prepared Under the Direction of the General Assembly Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1961n), p. 55.

Whenever ordination is understood to elevate one class of Christians to a higher status than others, Luther protests, chaos ensues and the integrity of baptism is undermined:

> They [Roman Catholics] have sought by this device to set up a nursery of implacable discord, whereby clerics and laymen should be separated from each other farther than heaven from earth, to the incredible injury of the grace of baptism and the confusion of our fellowship in the Gospel. Here, indeed, are the roots of that detestable tyranny of the clergy over the laity; trusting in the external anointing by which their hands are consecrated, in the tonsure and in vestments, they not only exalt themselves above lay Christians, who are only anointed with the Holy Spirit, but regard them almost as dogs and unworthy to be included with them in the Church....In short, the sacrament of ordination has been and is a most approved device for the establishing of all the horrible things that have been wrought hitherto and will yet be wrought in the Church.[170]

Beyond this rudimentary functional understanding of ordination, Luther does not seem much concerned with fleshing out the details of ministerial order.[171] Since the word has to be proclaimed and the sacraments properly administered, qualified people are needed to perform these tasks; yet Luther seems to believe that the tasks themselves will call up ministers to perform

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[170]Luther, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, pp. 278-279. By Luther's time, the concept of ecclesiastical office had degenerated into a situation of great complexity. In some places, a host of minor offices existed, including even such jobs as doorkeeper and gravedigger. A remarkably full treatment of the development of these minor offices, up until the 12th century, is Roger E. Reynolds, The Ordinals of Christ From Their Origins to the Twelfth Century (Berlin: Walter DeGruyter, 1978).

[171]B.A. Gerrish is convinced that Luther had a serious hope that "in the second generation [of the reform] the episcopate would be restored and would resume its traditional responsibility in ordination, but always with the people's consent" -- The Old Protestantism and the New (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1982), p. 103. This would account for Luther's seeming lack of interest in codifying ordination practice.

them. In this respect, Luther is something of an ecclesiological naif; like the early Paul, Luther believes that if the church will only preach the true gospel, then all other matters of ecclesiastical organization will be worked out harmoniously by the community as a whole, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

For this reason, ordination as such does not occupy a major place in Luther's theology. According to B.A. Gerrish, what is primary for him is not ordination, but calling; in Luther's thought, ordination and calling are all but synonymous.[172] For Luther, ordination does not convey any special charisma or divine grace, but is rather to be understood on a purely functional basis:

> In his way of thinking, everything centers on the idea of calling, and to speak of ordination as imparting a special gift is to shift the center elsewhere....Nor does ordination transmit any "indelible character." Luther does not think of the ministry as attached to the person in this manner; he defines it in such strictly functional terms that it cannot be considered inalienable.[173]

The chief role of ministers, in Luther's view, is to serve as God's instruments for the proclamation of the gospel; as he declares on several occasions with characteristic bluntness, "The mouth of the preacher is the mouth of God."[174] "The duty of a

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[172]The Old Protestantism and the New, p. 103.

[173]Gerrish, pp. 103-104.

[174]Luther, Lectures on Romans, trans. Wilhelm Pauck (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), pp. 104-106. Paul D.L. Avis, The Church in the Theology of the Reformers (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1981), pp. 91ff., has a concise but very thorough treatment of how ecclesiastical concerns were secondary for Luther. Another good general source on the doctrines of ministry of both Luther and Calvin is Wilhelm Pauck, "The Ministry in the Time of the Continental Reformation," in The Ministry in Historical Perspectives, ed. H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (New

priest," he says elsewhere, "is to preach, and if he does not preach he is as much a priest as a painted man is a man."[175]

The hallmark of the preaching ministry, as Luther sees it, is service:

> My office, and that of every preacher and minister, does not consist in any sort of lordship but in serving all of you, so that you learn to know God, become baptized, have the true word of God, and finally are saved. Never do I claim worldly power; princes and lords, mayors and judges, are to establish and provide for that. My office is merely a service which I am to give to everyone freely and gratuitously, nor should I seek from it either money or goods, either honor or anything else.[176]

Coupled with this functional understanding of ordination is the related doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Perhaps Luther's best-known exposition of this doctrine is in The Babylonian Captivity of the Church:

> Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian be assured of this, and apply it to himself -- that we are all priests, and there is no difference between us; that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and all the sacraments. However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. For what is common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he be called. And therefore this sacrament of ordination, if it have any meaning at all, is nothing else than a certain rite whereby one is called to the ministry of the Church.[177]

York: Harper, 1956), pp. 110-148.

[175]Luther, The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, p. 282.

[176]"Sermon on Matt. 20:24-28, 1537," quoted in What Luther Says, ed. E. Plass (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959) vol. 2, pp. 923-924.

[177]The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, pp. 282-283. As central as the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is for Luther, it is well to point out that he does not take it to mean -- as did some of the anabaptist defectors -- that there is no longer any need for an ordained ministry. As Gordon Rupp has remarked, "The priesthood of all believers never means for Luther what it has

Consequently, Luther could advise his followers that any believer -- in theory at least -- is permitted to baptize or to celebrate the Lord's Supper. He advises midwives to baptize dying infants, and teaches that any believer may pronounce absolution for a brother or sister in the faith. Furthermore, in theory a Christian congregation can do without a structured ministry altogether; a hypothetical congregation stranded in the wilderness could choose its own minister, and be assured that the preacher they chose would have as much authority as any appointed by a bishop or pope.[178]

The rite of the church that far eclipses ordination in importance, as far as Luther is concerned, is the sacrament of baptism. "Through baptism," he asserts in To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, "all of us are consecrated to the priesthood."[179] Luther's strongly functional theology of ordination is clearly seen in this passage from the same work:

> For whoever comes out of the water of baptism can boast that he is already consecrated priest, bishop and pope, though it is not seemly that everyone should exercise the office....Therefore a priest in Christendom is nothing else than an office-holder. While he is in office, he has precedence; when deposed, he is a peasant or a townsman like the rest....From all this it follows that there is really no difference between laymen and priests,

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sometimes meant in degenerate protestantism, the secularisation of the clergy, the doctrine that we are all laymen" -- The Righteousness of God: Luther Studies (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1953), p. 315.

[178]"To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," trans. C.M. Jacobs, in Works of Martin Luther, vol. II (Philadelphia: Holman, 1916), p. 67.

[179]p. 66.

> "spirituals" and "temporals," as they call them, except that of office and work...[180]

In practice, Luther came to modify these radically simple views. As the Anabaptist defections became a problem for him, Luther was forced to teach that priesthood is community property, and that no one can take on priestly functions unless that one is duly called by the community. "The public ministry of the Word," he writes, "ought to be established by holy ordination as the highest and greatest of the functions of the church."[181] Luther asserts that the distinction between clergy and laity is a necessary one -- although he is careful to point out that this is a distinction of function, not office.[182]

Luther, then, in rejecting Augustine's official, "indelible mark" theology of ordination, sets forth a highly functional view of the rite, that ties it intimately to the sacrament of baptism. Consistent with his own emphasis on the priesthood of all

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[180]To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation, pp. 68-69.

[181]Concerning the Ministry, in Luther's Works (St. Louis: Concordia), vol. 40, p. 11.

[182] "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation," trans. Charles M. Jacobs, in Luther's Works, vol. 44, pp. 129-130. See also Luther's commentary on "Psalm 82," trans. C.M. Jacobs, in Luther's Works, vol. 13, p. 65. This is using the word "office" in the modern sense. As Robert Clyde Johnson points out in his essay, "The Reformation and the Ministry," in The Church and Its Changing Ministry, ed. Robert Clyde Johnson (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1961), p. 57, to Luther and the other reformers the Latin "officium" most likely meant something akin to the English words "work" or "function." When the Reformers meant to say "office" in the sense we usually understand the word today -- that of a formal position in an organization -- they used the word munus. If he were faced with the choice between the modern English words "function" and "office" to describe ministry, Luther would undoubtedly opt for "function."

believers, Luther rejects any notion of ordination that would bestow on the ordinand any status higher than that of the ordinary baptized believer. So functional is Luther's understanding of ordination that he spends little energy, at least in his earlier writings, charting the details of ministerial order. His dynamic conception of the Holy Spirit's role in calling leaders for the church appears to suggest that the Spirit will take care of matters of ecclesiastical organization.

The Calvinist Reform

Like Luther, Calvin is one of those rare figures in the history of the church who had the opportunity to reform both doctrine and ecclesiastical government. Already an accomplished scholar, Calvin was handed the opportunity, as he returned to Geneva from Strasbourg in 1541, to totally remake church government in that city. This he accomplished, in part, through the Ecclesiastical Ordinances, adopted by the General Council of the inhabitants of Geneva that same year.[183] In the Institutes and in his commentaries on scripture, we have the opportunity to observe the unfolding of Calvin's ecclesiology; in the Ordinances and other documents of a more practical vein, we have the opportunity to watch his theology become enfleshed in the life and mission of the people of God.

Calvin's debt to Luther and to other continental reformers is

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[183]"Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances," in Calvin: Theological Treatises, trans. J.K.S. Reid (London: SCM, 1964; Library of Christian Classics vol. XXII).

considerable, for by sweeping away the last vestiges of Roman church government they cleared the decks for him to develop a new ministerial order, based on a fresh interpretation of the biblical and patristic sources.

In exploring Calvin's ministerial order, we will continue to trace diakonia, or servanthood, as a controlling paradigm. We have already seen how diakonia is the single most important biblical paradigm for understanding ministry; and in the last chapter we have traced how, beginning in the patristic period and continuing through the middle ages, the simple understanding of ministry as service of the word gradually became subsumed under a highly official view. We have just finished observing how Luther responded to this state of affairs by propounding a radically functional view of ministry, one which emphasizes service of the word and sacraments above all else -- but one which, being a first-generation reform, still cries out for practical application.

Calvin, with his trained legal mind, responded to the challenge left him by Luther and the other reformers who, in the first heady days of ecclesiastical rebellion, had followed Luther into the breach. In exploring Calvin's theology of ministry, we will begin by identifying our by-now-familiar theme of diakonia, as it is realized in Calvin's view of ministry as service to Jesus Christ, empowered and sustained by the Holy Spirit. From there we will move on to observe how Calvin applies his theology of ministry on a practical basis, instituting a distinctive ministerial order that is still the standard for Presbyterian and Reformed churches.

After that, we will consider in greater detail the qualifications and responsibilities of ordained leaders in general and ministers in particular, before moving on to Calvin's understanding of calling and ordination. Finally, we will identify three problems arising out of Calvin's theology of ministry: the tension between function and office, certain exegetical difficulties connected with Calvin's use of the biblical sources and the difficulty of making the Reformed ministerial offices ecumenically intelligible.

Ministry in Service to Jesus Christ

Calvin's theology of ministry is built around the concept of ministry (or service) of the word, which includes the central tasks of proclaiming the word and celebrating the sacraments. Unlike Luther, Calvin gives no indication that a structured ministry is to be handled warily, as a potential threat to the priesthood of all believers; on the contrary, he sees it as positively beneficial. Priesthood, for Calvin, is pre-eminently the prerogative of Jesus Christ, the one high priest; those who serve this high priest are servants or ministers of him, but not priests in their own right.

Calvin's theology of ordination proceeds directly from this pronounced focus on service to Jesus Christ. Since Christ is the sole head of the church, no individual in the church can claim personal authority over the body; authority in the church belongs to the word alone, not to the person proclaiming it.[184] Calvin

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[184] Institutes IV.3.2.; IV.8.2. T.F. Torrance, in Kingdom and Church (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1956) attributes Calvin's reluctance to ascribe official (as opposed to functional) authority

believes that this authority will arise out of the word itself; as Harro Höpfl summarizes Calvin's viewpoint, it is useless to speak of "rights" that pertain to ministers by virtue of their office:

> Calvin's purpose throughout was not only to arm the ministry with formal rights, but also and more important to secure a ministry which, by its own high standards, self-discipline, and corporate solidarity, would have the kind of moral authority that is worth more than any quantity of formal rights.[185]

Ministry, in Calvin's understanding, is shared. There is a single ministry in the church, which manifests itself in several modes. Although hints of a similar concept of plural ministry can perhaps be discerned in some of Luther's writings, the German reformer did not develop it. The full development of the idea of plural ministry must be credited to Calvin, who in making it such a central feature of his system distances himself considerably from Luther.[186]

Charismata for ministry, while bestowed by the Spirit on individuals, are given not in order to create individual privilege, but for the upbuilding of the community as a whole; God's

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to the minister to his thoroughgoing awareness of sin. For God to be active in the preaching of the word is for God to descend to our level, in an incarnational sense: "This clothing of the Word in our contemptible language is for Calvin part of the whole humiliation of the Word or the Son on the Cross, so that the preaching of this same Word, which is thus the Word of the Cross, makes foolish the wisdom of the world" (p. 127). For more on Calvin's belief that God can use even deficient people to preach the word, in order to accommodate to human sin, see also R.S. Wallace, Calvin on the Word and Sacrament (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1953), pp. 117-118.

[185]The Christian Polity of John Calvin (Cambridge: University Press, 1982), p. 91.

[186]See Elsie McKee, John Calvin On the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1984), p. 133.

distribution of gifts never exalts particular individuals, but is rather an accommodation to human weakness, so the church may be equipped to serve as God's instrument in the world.[187] As the church is Christ's body, so its ministry must be as well-ordered as the human body; "decency and order" (1 Cor. 14:40) are always to be the standards for Christian ministry.[188]

Ministry Sustained By the Holy Spirit

Not only does Calvin use Christological terms to describe the minister's role; he also relies on the Holy Spirit as an explanation for how ministry in the church comes to be, and how it is sustained.[189]

In order for ministers to speak with the voice of Christ, Calvin observes, they must have the gift of the Holy Spirit poured

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[187] Institutes IV.8.12.; "Sermon on Ephesians 4:11-12," in Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians, translator anonymous (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973), pp. 370ff.

[188] Institutes IV.3.10. For Calvin, it is indispensable that ministers be elected by the community. By "election," however, Calvin does not understand a choice by popular vote, but rather by an elite body, such as the consistory. "No one must be elected," he says, "who is not of sound doctrine and of saintly life" (Institutes IV.3.12).

[189]Brian Armstrong, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Calvin's Teaching On the Ministry," in Calvin and the Holy Spirit: Papers and Responses Presented at the Sixth Colloquium On Calvin and Calvin Studies Sponsored By the Calvin Studies Society (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Calvin Studies Society, 1989), pp. 99-113, makes the point that Calvin's reliance on the Holy Spirit as a foundation for ministry has not received as much scholarly attention as his Christological focus. Armstrong attributes this to the fact that Calvin does not have much to say on this subject in the Institutes, although he does mention it frequently in his commentaries and sermons.

out upon them:

> Because no mortal man is fit for such a difficult office....Christ institutes the apostles by the grace of his Spirit. And indeed, to govern the Church of God, to bear the embassy of eternal salvation, to set up God's kingdom on earth and to lift men to heaven is something far beyond human capacity. It is not surprising therefore that no man is found fit unless he is inspired...by the Holy Spirit. For nobody can speak one word about Christ unless the Spirit governs his tongue...[190]

The presence (or absence) of gifts of the Holy Spirit is always to be considered in judging the competence of a preacher:

> ...those whom Christ calls to the pastoral office...He also adorns with the necessary gifts, that they may be equal to discharging their duty, or at least may not come to it empty and naked....a sure rule is here laid down for judging the calling of those who preside over God's church -- if we see the gifts of the Holy Spirit.[191]

This divine initiative calls forth a response on the part of the preacher. Ministers must do their part, approaching the homiletic task with diligent preparation. There is, Calvin says, a "joining [of] the power of [Christ's] Spirit with the activity of man."[192]

Yet as important as human effort is, it is of no avail if the minister has not first been "qualified" by the Spirit of God:

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[190]The Gospel According to St. John and the First Epistle of John, 2 vols., trans. T.H.L. Parker, in Calvin's Commentaries ed. David W. and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959-61), vol. 2, p. 4 (John 11:10).

[191]The Gospel According to St. John, vol. 2, p. 205 (John 20:22).

[192]The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, trans. T.H.L. Parker, in Calvin's Commentaries, ed. David W. and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 83 (Galatians 4:19).

> No man is fit to teach who has not first been qualified by God. This reminds all godly teachers to ask from the Spirit of God what otherwise they could not at all possess. They must indeed study diligently, so as not to ascend the pulpit till they have been fully prepared; but they must hold by this principle, that all things necessary for discharging their office are gifts of the Holy Spirit. And, indeed, if they were not organs of the Holy Spirit, it would be extreme rashness to come forth publicly in the name of God.[193]

The Holy Spirit's role in sustaining the church's ministry is especially important for Calvin's understanding of the rite of ordination. Commenting on the ordination of deacons in Acts 6, Calvin calls the rite "a solemn symbol of consecration under the law."[194] The laying on of hands is always to be accompanied by prayer -- for without prayer, the rite is "empty in itself." Calvin concludes that:

> ...the laying on of hands is a rite consistent with order and dignity, seeing that it was used by the apostles; not of course that it has any efficacy or virtue in itself, but its power and effect depend wholly on the Spirit of God. That must be the general opinion about all ceremonies.[195]

Ministers, in Calvin's schema, are servants of Jesus Christ, related to Christ as parts of the human body are related to the head. Yet they are also servants of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has an important -- and sometimes unheralded -- role in calling, in ordination and in the effective exercise of ministry.

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[193]Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, 4 vols., trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), vol. 4, pp. 52-53 (Isaiah 50:4).

[194]The Acts of the Apostles 1-13, trans. John W. Fraser and W.J.G. MacDonald (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1965), p. 163.

[195]The Acts of the Apostles 1-13, p. 163.

Calvin's Ministerial Order

Unlike Luther, Calvin personally constructed a ministerial order which we can clearly observe. Lutheran ministerial order did not mature until the second generation of the reform, when under the influence of Melanchthon and others church law was codified. Calvin, however, used his legally-trained mind to establish an actual church order in Geneva, contemporaneous with his theological work.

Calvin's Genevan ministerial order is fourfold, comprised of pastors, doctors, elders, and deacons.[196] While he lists four discrete offices, in reality his ministerial order is comprised of only three functions, those belonging to pastors, elders, and deacons -- for he considers doctors' work to be a subdivision or specialty of the pastoral function.[197]

It was not long after Calvin's time that the distinct order of doctor disappeared from the Reformed churches, subsumed under the

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[196] Institutes IV.1.1; IV.3.4,8,9.; IV.4.1.; "Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances," p. 58. François Wendel, in Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 76, 302, traces Calvin's four offices to Bucer in Strasbourg.

[197] This is the case, as Benjamin Milner points out in Calvin's Doctrine of the Church (Leiden: Brill, 1970), pp. 145ff., because for Calvin all pastors are necessarily teachers, but not all teachers are pastors. In actual practice, the doctors and pastors in Calvin's Geneva were often the same individuals. See also Calvin's Commentary on Ephesians 4:11, as well as Institutes IV.3.4. and especially IV.4.1., in which Calvin speaks of three (rather than four) orders. See also "The Necessity of Reforming the Church," in Calvin: Theological Treatises, ed. J.K.S. Reid, p. 206, in which Calvin insists that all who rule in the church should also teach.

order of pastor.[198] When this occurred, Reformed ministerial order became threefold in order as well as in function.

Furthermore, Calvin sees the offices of presbyter and pastor as being integrally related, two aspects of the same office.[199] Since he also sees ample scriptural evidence for considering the words "bishop" and "presbyter" as functionally identical in the early church -- an insight which John T. McNeill calls "a cardinal principal of Presbyterian polity" -- we have in the Institutes the seeds of tremendous confusion for future generations who have sought, in Calvin, a single pattern of ministerial order that is both biblical and Reformed.[200] We will have more to say about this problem later in this chapter, as we consider the ecumenical intelligibility of Calvin's ministerial order.

While Calvin professes to see in the New Testament a single pattern of ministerial order -- that of a pastor/bishop surrounded by presbyters -- he does not in practice see that New Testament model as one to be slavishly emulated. Rather, he sees the New Testament vision of ministry as mission-driven, constructed for the sole purpose of bringing God's word to the people. As long as the

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[198]We have previously cited Robert W. Henderson, The Teaching Office in the Reformed Tradition (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) as the leading study of the order of doctor in the Reformed churches.

[199]"For the order of presbyters [in the ancient church] (1) part were chosen pastors and teachers; (2) the remaining part were charged with the censure and correction of morals... (Institutes IV.4.1).

[200]Calvin identifies presbyters and pastors in Institutes IV.4.1, and bishops and presbyters in IV.3.8 and IV.4.2; McNeill's comment is in IV.3.8., n.8.

word is proclaimed, the sacraments faithfully administered and discipline judiciously upheld, considerable flexibility is possible in the ways the church chooses to order its ministry.[201] While Calvin's ministerial order is official in insisting on a divinely called, popularly elected ministry of word and sacrament, it is functional in allowing a certain degree of flexibility for implementation.

Qualifications of Ordained Leaders

All those exercising public ministry in the church must, in Calvin's view, have both a valid call from a church and an approved field in which to exercise their ministry.[202] This is consistent, in Calvin's mind, with the radical centrality of Christ's rule over the church -- for as "the order by which God willed his church to be governed" and "the principal sinew by which the faithful are held together in one body," ministry of the word is a direct instrument of Christ's rule over the church.[203] No individual can

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[201]Calvin does not explicitly identify discipline as a third "mark of the church," alongside proclamation of the word and celebration of the sacraments; the elevation of discipline as the third mark is properly credited to Calvin's disciple John Knox. The concept of ecclesiastical discipline is visible enough in Calvin's writings, however, for us to declare that for him it is essential to the church's well-being.

[202] Institutes IV.2.10.; IV.5.1-8

[203] Ministry in Calvin's view is "a sort of delegated work" of God -- Institutes IV.3.1-2. In his "Summary of Doctrine Concerning the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments," in Calvin: Theological Treatises, ed. J.K.S. Reid, pp. 172-173, Calvin speaks of two ministries: the "external" minister who is the human being, and the "internal" minister who is the Holy Spirit.

hold the office which belongs to Christ alone -- that is, high priesthood.[204]

Pastors, in Calvin's scheme, have the responsibility:

> ...to proclaim the Word of God, to instruct, admonish, exhort, and censure, both in public and private, to administer the sacraments and to enjoin brotherly correction along with the elders and colleagues.[205]

The marks of the order of pastor are the preaching of the word, the care of discipline, and the administration of the sacraments.[206] Pastors are to be selected by means of an examination of their doctrine and their faithfulness in Christian life, and are ordinarily to be ordained by the laying on of hands.[207]

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[204] Institutes II.15.6.; IV.19.28.

[205] "Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances," p. 58. In the Institutes, Calvin subsumes these three functions under the two of proclaiming the word and celebrating the sacraments. "Private admonitions" (discipline) here becomes a subcategory of "proclaiming the gospel," which also includes "public discourses."

[206] Institutes IV.5.10. These correspond to the Reformed marks of the church, if we include discipline along with the two classical marks of word and sacrament. In Calvin's view it is crucial for the tasks of preaching and the celebration of the sacraments to be carried out by one person -- for this a symbol of the basic Reformed principle that sacraments without the word are superstition, and the word without the sacraments is empty.

[207] Calvin recommends the laying on of hands as having the weight of tradition behind it, but counsels that the ceremony should be avoided in any situation in which there is a danger of it leading to superstition. See "The Necessity of Reforming the Church," pp. 209-210, and "Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances," p. 59. Wendel attributes Calvin's reluctance to recommend the laying on of hands to pressure from the authorities in Geneva, who wanted uniformity with Bernese practice (p. 71). Calvin makes no mention of the ordination of elders or deacons in the "Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances," speaking only of the proper procedure for their election.

Although our focus is on ministry of the word, it will be helpful at this juncture to briefly catalogue the responsibilities associated with Calvin's other church offices, since in his ecclesiastical organization ministers function in coordination with them.

Doctors are to teach, taking particular care in catechizing and preparing candidates for ministry. Their task is:

> ...the instruction of the faithful in true doctrine, in order that the purity of the Gospel be not corrupted either by ignorance or by evil opinion.[208]

That Calvin gives teachers of doctrine their own ecclesiastical office speaks of the high regard in which he holds correctness of doctrine.

The office of elder is perhaps the most distinctive office of the churches of the Reformed tradition.[209] The chief function of elders is to rule over the church -- as a corporate assembly, and individually in cooperation with the pastors:

> Their office is to have oversight of the life of everyone, to admonish amicably those whom they see to be erring or to be living a disordered life, and where it is to be required, to enjoin fraternal corrections themselves and along with others.[210]

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[208] "Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances," p. 62.

[209] As distinctive as the eldership now is for churches of the Reformed tradition, the office appears only late in Calvin's writings. Wendel's theory is that Calvin adopted the office with enthusiasm only after he had had the opportunity to see actual elders at work in Basel (pp. 304-305). It is also likely that Calvin was relying heavily on the pastoral epistles in formulating his ministerial order; as we have seen, the pastorals mention ministers and deacons, but no elders.

[210] "Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances," p. 63. See also Institutes IV.5.5.

Thus, for Calvin, oversight in the church belongs particularly to presbyters. Oversight is always to be exercised communally; although elders may sometimes be called upon to admonish church members individually, this is always seen as an extension of the discipline exercised through the corporate gathering.

Although they "rule," elders do not in any sense displace Jesus Christ as the one ruler over the church. Geddes MacGregor makes the helpful suggestion that, in Calvin's scheme, ruling elders rule not as a king rules, but as a measuring stick "rules out" or measures a piece of cloth; their function is regulative, not monarchical.[211]

In establishing the eldership, Calvin believes he is recovering the pattern of oversight practiced by the early church and later usurped by the monarchical bishops.[212] While he may have been inspired by the work of other reformers or by existing secular institutions, Calvin is certainly the one who gave the eldership its systematic expression for Reformed Christians.[213]

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[211]Corpus Christi: The Nature of the Church According to the Reformed Tradition (London: Macmillan, 1959), pp. 216-217. Calvin looks to the magistrates, not the elders, to exercise kingly rule in the secular context -- although even this secular rule is always to be expressed in a corporate fashion.

[212]Institutes IV.5.4.

[213]John McNeill, in The History and Character of Calvinism (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 83-84, gives Oecolampadius in Basel the credit for conceiving the office of elder. R.W. Henderson, in "Concerning the Eldership, Part I," in Reformed World, vol. 32, no. 8, Dec. 1973, pp. 363-373, credits Bucer in Strasbourg with first adapting the secular office of Kirchenpfleger to ecclesiastical purposes. Henderson points out, in the same article, that the order of elder has evolved since Calvin's time in two separate directions: one in which elders are

Calvin sees the order of deacon as having two principal functions, deriving from the model of the early church:

> There were always two kinds in the ancient church, the one deputed to receive, dispense and hold goods for the poor, not only daily alms but also possessions, rents and pensions; the other to tend and care for the sick and administer allowances to the poor.[214]

Calvin's deacons have three functions: receiving money, disbursing it and visiting the poor.[215] Calvin condemns any ministerial order, such as the Roman one of his day, which leads deacons to put aside these functions in favor of liturgical or other duties.[216]

Through all the centuries since Calvin, the Genevan ministerial order has been revised only slightly by the various churches of the Reformed tradition. We have already seen how the order of doctor became subsumed in most places under that of pastor; additionally, the diaconate in some Reformed churches has

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seen as a constituent part of the church's ordained, public ministry, and another -- stemming from the British presbyterianism of Westminster -- in which they are seen as a group of lay assistants to the pastor.

[214] "Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances," p. 64. See also Institutes IV.4.5., and Calvin's commentary on Philippians 1:1 in The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, pp. 227-228.

[215] Jeannine E. Olson, Calvin and Social Welfare (Selinsgrove, Pa.: Susquehanna University Press, 1989), p. 72.

[216] Institutes IV.5.15,19. R.W. Henderson, in "Sixteenth-Century Community Benevolence: An Attempt to Resacralize the Secular," in Church History, vol. 38, no. 4, Dec. 1969, pp. 421-428, suggests that Calvin "resacralized" an existing Genevan secular office, following the biblical model. The most thorough study on the diaconate in Calvin's Geneva is the work by Elsie McKee we have already cited, John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving.

become exclusively a women's order or has dropped out of existence altogether. Some Reformed churches have become more congregational than presbyterian, vesting less authority in the presbytery and more in the local congregation.[217] One Reformed church -- the Hungarian Reformed Church -- has taken the opposite direction, giving modified episcopacy a place in its polity.

Yet even with these variations, the Reformed churches have by and large remained quite close to one another in their adherence to Calvin's original vision. The principles of Calvin's ministerial order are still the basis of Reformed church order throughout the world.

Calvin's Understanding of the Office of Minister

Now that we have completed an overview of Calvin's four offices, it is appropriate that we focus in greater detail on the office of minister of the word and sacrament.

Calvin's conception of the office, as we have seen, is both functional and official. Like Luther, he sees ministry as constituted for one primary task: proclamation of the word. Throughout his writings, Calvin places great stress on the duties, functions and service of ministers; he resists any attempts to ascribe to the office, or to its occupants, facile honor, status or prestige.

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[217]We will have more to say in the next chapter about the nature of the presbytery, that distinctively Reformed regional governing body, particularly with regard to its role in the Scottish reformation.

Calvin has an extremely high regard for the function of preaching that is the central feature of this office:

> [God] uses the ministry of men to declare openly his will to us by mouth, as a sort of delegated work, not by transferring to them his right and honor, but only that through their mouths he may do his own work -- just as a workman uses a tool to do his work.[218]

Calvin sees the office of ministry of the word as a gift, an instance of God's condescension and accommodation to human beings in their fallen state. God could come into the world directly at any time, giving us the message in person; but instead God speaks to us in a human form that is easier to accept.[219] We receive ministry as a divinely ordered gift.[220] As Robert Clyde Johnson puts it:

We must not overlook, as Calvin did not, the kinship of

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[218]Institutes IV.3.1. Calvin maintains that God could do the work of proclamation without resorting to human assistance, but chooses this delegated means to "declare his regard for" humanity, to humble us (as we see how God sometimes chooses even "those of lower worth than we"), and to strengthen the bonds of our common fellowship.

[219]See Calvin's commentary on Eph. 4:12 in The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, p. 180. In his Sermon no. 43 on Deut. 5:23-27, Calvin says, "...if [God] spoke to us in his own majesty, or sent some angel to appear unto us, we would be the better touched, and all the world would be converted by and by, and every man obey without gainsaying or rebelling: but we know not what is for our own benefit....For if we look upon our own frailty, it is not possible that God should make us feel his power, but it should be to our utter undoing and destruction....God intends our welfare and salvation, in showing us his will by the mouth of men, when he ordains and appoints them to be ministers of his word, to bring us such message as he knows to be for our benefit." -- Sermons of John Calvin On the Fifth Book of Moses Called Deuteronomy, trans. Arthur Golding (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, facsimile reprint of 1583 edition, 1987), p. 254.

[220]Institutes IV.3.1.

> the biblical words "grace" and "gift," charis and charismata. If we speak accurately, we can say that Calvin held a "charismatic" view of the ministry; which is to say, he viewed the grace of God as both the originating and the continuing reality that makes possible any and all Christian ministry.[221]

As Calvin himself says in his commentary on Ephesians 4:11, bearing witness to the radical dependence of ministry on Jesus Christ:

> ...the government of the Church by the ministry of the Word is not contrived by men, but set up by the Son of God...It is Himself who gave [ministers]; for if He does not raise them up, there will be none. Another inference is that no man will be fit or equal for so distinguished an office who has not been formed and made by Christ himself. That we have ministers of the Gospel is His gift; that they excel in necessary gifts is His gift; that they execute the trust committed to them, is likewise His gift.[222]

Ronald S. Wallace, in Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament, assembles a number of pithy images that Calvin uses to describe the centrality of ministry of the word in the life of the church: commenting on Ephesians 4:12, Calvin likens the work of a preacher to that of a father, cutting his children's food into small pieces for them to eat; reflecting on Acts 8:21, he remarks that God could have sent an angel to explain to the Ethiopian eunuch the meaning of the scriptures, but does not, sending Philip instead.[223] In this passage from a sermon on 1 Timothy 3:14-15, Calvin describes this accommodating ministry as essential to the

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[221]"The Reformation and the Ministry," p. 61.

[222]The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, p. 178.

[223](Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), pp. 115-116.

very essence of the church:

> God will not come down from heaven; neither will He send his angels to bring us revelations from above; but He will be made known to us by His Word, for this cause he would have ministers of the church to preach His truth and to teach us. And if we have not this, we have not the Church of God, but are guilty of abolishing his truth...we are traitors and murderers.[224]

Calvin has harsh words for those who turn away from hearing God's word preached, out of concern about the "baseness" of the person called to be the preacher, or for any other reason:

> ...among the many excellent gifts with which God has adorned the human race, it is a singular privilege that he deigns to consecrate to himself the mouths and tongues of men in order that his voice may resound in them. Let us accordingly not in turn dislike to embrace obediently the doctrine of salvation put forth by his command and by his own mouth....Fanatical men, refusing to hold fast to it, entangle themselves in many deadly snares. Many are led either by pride, dislike, or rivalry to the conviction that they can profit enough from private reading and meditation; hence they despise public assemblies and deem preaching superfluous. But...no one escapes the just penalty of this unholy separation without bewitching himself with pestilent errors and foulest delusions.[225]

Wilhelm Pauck notes, on the subject of preaching, that the titles commonly used by churches of the Reformation (Lutheran as well as Calvinist) to describe ministers reflect this characteristic focus on preaching as the pre-eminent ministerial function. Although the reformers often use the word "pastor" (shepherd), Pauck notes, their preferred term is "preacher." The German reformers also use the word pfarrer, which is related to

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[224]Sermon on 1 Tim. 3:14-15, in Sermons on the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, trans. by "L.T." (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, facsimile reprint of 1579 edition, 1983), pp. 311-312.

[225]Institutes IV.1.4.

parochia (or parish) and parochus (or parson). It was only in the eighteenth century, under the influence of pietism (especially in Lutheranism) that the word "pastor" came to the fore. The term "minister" is the contribution of Reformed churches, who -- under Calvin's influence -- emphasize the role of the minister as ministerium verbi divini, "servant of the word of God."[226]

Looking at the matter from another standpoint, from that of the minister rather than the worshiper, we come to the realization that the spirituality of the minister must necessarily be grounded in humility and servanthood. If the very call ministers have received is grounded in God's accommodation to a fallen world and in the humble realization that all is a free and graceful gift, then ministers will approach their tasks with appropriate awe and gratitude. The calling of ministers, in Calvin's understanding, is but one aspect of God's ongoing work of redemption.

Ministry, then, is more than merely a convenience, one option among many through which people may learn of the gospel; it is essential to the health of the church. Ministry is "the chief sinew by which believers are held together in one body....For neither the light and heat of the sun, nor food and drink, are so necessary to nourish and sustain the present life as the apostolic and pastoral office is necessary to preserve the church on

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[226]"The Ministry in the Time of the Continental Reformation," in The Ministry in Historical Perspectives, ed. Niebuhr and Williams, p. 116.

earth."[227] In using such effusive terms, Calvin clearly goes beyond a definition of ministry as merely functional; he sees it instead as a divinely established office.

The Calling and Ordination of Ministers

It is essential, Calvin teaches, that ministers be called to their task. Calling, for him, has two components, an "outward and solemn call" and an inner or "secret call."[228] The calling of church leaders is always to take place with the utmost "religious awe," with fasting and with prayers.[229] Calvin quotes both scripture and the writings of Cyprian as evidence for the practice of the people of God electing their own ministers.[230]

As for the act of ordination itself, Calvin seems not to have developed a clear theology. In two places in the Institutes, he

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[227]Institutes IV.3.2. Preaching is, in fact, the distinguishing mark of the church: "Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists" (IV.1.9).

[228]Institutes IV.3.11. Calvin is reluctant to comment further on the secret call, "of which each minister is conscious before God, and which does not have the church as witness." The absence of further discussion in the Institutes of the secret call is not evidence of lack of interest on Calvin's part; since the purpose of the Institutes is to provide a working theological manual for the organizational church, further discussion of such a personal and spiritual matter does not have a place in that work, nor in the even more organizationally-delimited Ecclesiastical Ordinances.

[229]Institutes IV.3.12.

[230]Institutes IV.3.13-15. He cites Titus 1:5, 1 Timothy 5:22, Acts 1:15ff., 6:2-7, 14:23, and Cyprian, Letters lxvii.4.

comes close to considering it a sacrament.[231] Yet elsewhere he declares that he has not named it as a sacrament "because it is not ordinary and common with all believers, but is a special rite for a particular office."[232]

Calvin rejects any understanding of ordination as conferring an "indelible mark." He also repudiates any view of the laying on of hands as transmitting the Holy Spirit in any instrumental sense. Remarking on how the risen Christ breathed the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, Calvin says of the Roman bishops' claim that their hands convey the Holy Spirit at ordination:

> By this symbol [our Lord] represented the power of the Holy Spirit, which he gave them. These good men have retained this insufflation, and, as if they are putting forth the Holy Spirit from their throat, they mutter over those whom they are making priestlings, "Receive the Holy

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[231]"I would not go against calling the laying on of hands, by which ministers of the church are initiated into their office, a sacrament, but I do not include it among the ordinary sacraments." (IV.14.20); "There remains the laying on of hands. As I concede that it is a sacrament in true and lawful ordinations, so I deny that it has a place in this farce [the use of oil to anoint a priest at a Roman ordination]" (IV.19.31). In "The True Method of Giving Peace to Christendom and Reforming the Church," in Tracts and Treatises In Defense of the Reformed Faith, vol. III, trans. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1851), p. 291, Calvin objects not so much to the view that ordination is a sacrament, but to its wide use in the Roman church to initiate people to a variety of offices: "The Laying On of Hands, by which Ministers are consecrated to their office, I do not quarrel with them for calling it a Sacrament. But that this appellation should be applied to what they call the seven orders, as they have hitherto been received in the Papacy...I hold to be not at all agreeable to reason."

[232]Institutes IV.19.28. Höpfl, in The Christian Polity of John Calvin, p. 261, n. 21, notes that Calvin here is not being true to his own definition of a sacrament. This universal availability criterion is part neither of Calvin's short definition of a sacrament as "an external ceremony appointed by God to confirm a promise" (IV.19.34), nor of his expanded definition in IV.12.1.

> Spirit"....If they try to do this, they rival God and all but challenge him in a contest, but are very far from being effective, and by their inept gesture do nothing but mock Christ. Indeed, they are so shameless as to dare affirm that they confer the Holy Spirit. But how true that is, experience teaches, which cries out that all those who are consecrated as priests are turned from horses into asses, from fools into madmen. Nevertheless, it is not over this that I have a quarrel with them. I am only condemning the ceremony itself...[233]

Calvin also does not permit the Roman practice of ordaining ministers who do not have a particular pastoral charge. This is for two reasons: to save the church unnecessary expense, and to insure that "those ordained are not to think themselves promoted to an honor but charged with an office."[234]

To Calvin, the laying on of hands has special significance to the person being ordained, for it "warns the one ordained that he is no longer a law unto himself, but bound in servitude to God and the church."[235] Calvin appreciates the potent symbolism of the rite -- but, since he sees no "set precept" in scripture declaring how it is to be administered, he declines to issue precise rubrics for ordination (and, as we have seen, chooses not to use the laying on of hands at all in the Genevan church, because of the potential for misunderstanding). Calvin is most concerned here not with the rite of ordination itself, but with its underlying symbolism. "It will be no empty sign," he predicts, "if it is restored to its own

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[233]Institutes IV.19.29.

[234]Institutes IV.5.4.

[235]Institutes, IV.3.16.

true origin."[236]

The Tension Between Function and Office

We now turn to the first of three problems arising out of Calvin's theology of ministry: an inherent tension in his thought between ministry as function and ministry as office.

Far from perceiving in scripture a rigid organizational scheme and imposing it on the contemporary church, Calvin sees a cluster of functions that must be carried on in the church in one form or another. As he looks to the New Testament and patristic documents, Calvin identifies church offices that he is able to commend as fulfilling those functions. Yet he is flexible enough to realize that there are sometimes varied ways in which the church can order itself, and still achieve the same results.

For all his reliance on scripture, Calvin still does not identify anywhere in the Bible a precise blueprint for ministerial order. God's desire, as he sees it, is that certain ministerial functions be preserved; the particular vessel in which the function is housed is a matter of relative indifference. In the Institutes, for example, Calvin makes mention of certain offices such as prophet and evangelist which are no longer in currency, but which the Lord may yet choose to raise up "at a later period...as has happened in our own day."[237] On a number of occasions, when

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[236]Institutes IV.3.16.

[237]IV.3.4. It is McNeill 's view that Calvin is referring to Luther here (n. 4).

deriding the unfaithfulness of the Roman clergy of his time, Calvin concedes that many Roman ecclesiastical practices are not corrupt in themselves, but merely misused. He is not even averse, in principle, to a separate ecclesiastical office of bishop -- provided such bishops exercise rule in a true and faithful fashion.[238] He acknowledges also that many of the names used in scripture identify church offices are interchangeable.[239]

Although Calvin's approach to particular ministerial offices is functional, he demonstrates something of an official view when it comes to ministry in general. The particular manifestations of ministerial office are open to negotiation, but there is no question for him that the church needs an ordained ministry of some sort. Ministry is "an inviolable ordinance, proceeding from God."[240] Whoever undermines the ministry plots the destruction of the church.[241]

Calvin is no ecclesiastical anarchist. Distrusting "the passions of the common people" and fearing "the anarchical disorder that must soon follow when every man is allowed to do as he likes," Calvin lauds a structured ministry as a manifestation of the divine

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[238]Institutes IV.5.11.

[239]Institutes IV.3.8.

[240]Sermon no. 43 on Deuteronomy 5:23-27, in Sermons of John Calvin on the Fifth Book of Moses Called Deuteronomy, p. 258.

[241]Institutes IV.3.2. In his own way, Calvin is just as emphatic in identifying ministers with the esse of the church as is Ignatius in so identifying bishops.

order on earth.[242] In this sense, he demonstrates an official view of ministry. "The authority of rulers [in the church]," he writes, "is therefore a bridle necessary to maintain order in the church."[243]

Calvin even employs the medieval theological distinction between the clergy as the "soul" of the church and the laity as its "body."[244] As Höpfl puts it:

> He positively approved hierarchy as a means to decency and good order in the church; his sole concern was with excluding primatus and dominium of one minister over others. The ministry must be collegial. And the history of the Roman church...was precisely a melancholy and lamentable story of the deterioration of the intrinsically sound arrangement of a presidency ultimately subject to the ministerial college, into a corrupt anti-Christian tyranny of one over all the earth.[245]

So emphatic is Calvin on this point that it is possible to charge him with neglecting the signal reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers; indeed, he makes little room in his theological or ecclesiastical system for the vocation of ordinary

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[242]Commentary on John 7:47 in Calvin's Commentaries: The Gospel According to St. John, trans. T.H.L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 202.

[243]Commentary on John 7:47, in Calvin's Commentaries: The Gospel According to St. John, p. 202.

[244]Commentary on Jeremiah 31:14, cited by William J. Bouwsma, "The Legacy of John Calvin for the Ministry of the Reformed Church," in Ministry in the Life of the Reformed Church Today: Papers Presented At a Colloquium in Honor of John Haddon Leith, ed. Charles E. Raynal (Davidson, North Carolina: Davidson College Presbyterian Church, 1991), p. 220.

[245]The Christian Polity of John Calvin, p. 110.

Christians.[246]

Höpfl cites an excerpt from a January, 1539 letter to Pignaeus, in which Calvin objects that his antagonists "involve themselves and the whole business in miserable confusion, as long as they do not distinguish between the minister and the private member [of the church]."[247] In March, 1539, Calvin wrote to Farel, recounting some discussions he had had in Frankfurt:

> ...the first thing that made them angry was that I was distinguishing between the minister and the people, and was asserting the former to be a steward, in whom prudence and fidelity are required. From private persons less is asked, I said...[248]

Calvin's clericalism is perhaps surprising, in light of Luther's strong conviction that the word of God itself will raise up preachers to proclaim it, but Calvin is a very different sort of

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[246] On Calvin and the priesthood of all believers, see Wilhelm Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth, 1956), pp. 202-203. See also Killian McDonnell, "Roman Catholicism and Calvin's Ecclesiological Transcendentalism," in Reformed and Presbyterian World, vol. XXIX, no. 4, Dec. 1966, pp. 161ff. See also Avis, p. 96. The question of whether Calvin ever affirmed the priesthood of all believers is one that has troubled scholars for centuries. It is said that the American theologian Albert Outler regularly offered a prize of one hundred dollars to any one of his students who could discover an explicit endorsement of the doctrine in any of Calvin's writings; the prize was never collected. William J. Bouwsma, in John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait (New York: Oxford, 1988), p. 219, asserts that "though he did not directly challenge the doctrine, Calvin did not subscribe to Luther's priesthood of all believers."

[247] The Christian Polity of John Calvin, p. 99, citing Calvini Opera 10,II,309.

[248] The Christian Polity of John Calvin, p. 99, citing Calvini Opera 10,II,323. Calvin makes a similar point in Institutes IV.12.1, in which he divides the church into "two chief orders: clergy and people," and speaks not only of a "common discipline" belonging to all Christians, but also of a special discipline belonging to the clergy.

theologian. He writes from a time and place in which the maintenance of ecclesiastical order is an overriding issue; his task in Geneva, as he sees it, is not to challenge an existing order, but to build a new one founded on biblical principles.[249]

There is, then, a tension present in Calvin's writings on ministry. On the one hand is his conviction that the functions of ministry -- the tasks of proclaiming the word, celebrating the sacraments and administering ecclesiastical discipline -- are of overriding importance. On the other hand, there is Calvin's conviction that the office of ministry -- particularly the preaching ministry -- is of the essence of the church.

Perhaps a way to resolve the tension, or at least to live with it, is by utilizing an image suggested by Thomas F. Torrance of the minister as steward. The image comes from Calvin's commentary on Matthew 21:23, whose words Torrance quotes as follows:

> ...while God appoints pastors over his church, he does not convey His right to others, but acts in the same manner as if a proprietor were to let a vineyard or field to a husbandman, who would labour in the cultivation of it and make an annual return.[250]

Central to Calvin's theology of ordination is the notion of stewardship. As stewards, pastors are servants of God, exercising diakonia in the "vineyard" to which they have been called. The office of ministry of the word is essential to the church, but only

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[249]As T.F. Torrance summarizes Calvin's view, "Until Christ comes the Church is engaged in warfare and her weapon is the Word of God, for it is through the majesty of the Word that disorder is subdued to order, and the deformed state of the Church is reformed to conformity with Christ" -- Kingdom and Church, p. 136.

[250]Kingdom and Church, p. 132.

insofar as the officeholders are faithful in their service (in other words, as long as they faithfully perform the functions of ministry). Stewardship, in other words, is the unifying concept that makes it possible for Calvin to hold both a functional and an official view of ministry.

Calvin's Use of the Biblical Sources

The second problem we must consider is Calvin's approach to the biblical material.

Calvin's perception of the scriptural mandate for his Genevan ministerial order is demonstrated in Book IV of the Institutes. From his late-medieval frame of reference -- uninformed as he inevitably was about modern theories of dating and authorship of New Testament books and the insights of higher criticism -- Calvin generalizes from the witness of a few biblical books to draw conclusions concerning the practices of the whole New Testament church.[251] "I approve only those human constitutions," he writes,

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[251]Höpfl, The Christian Polity of John Calvin, p. 260, n. 16, cites the following examples of Calvin's misuse of scripture, which he calls "strained interpretation": his treatment of 2 Cor. 4:6 in Institutes IV.3.3, which does not demonstrate that ministers can be seen as "governing"; the rather contrived distinction between "permanent" and "temporary" offices in IV.3.4-5; the interpretation of 1 Cor. 12:28 and Romans 12:8 as proving the existence in the Pauline churches of a college of elders (IV.3.8, IV.2.1); the assertion that first-century ministers were the choice of the whole church, despite evidence in the pastorals that they were sometimes individually appointed (IV.3.15); the argument from silence against monarchical rule in the church, based on Paul's failure in Eph. 4:4-5 to mention a pope (IV.6.10). Höpfl says earlier, "This is not, of course, to say that Calvin was consciously distorting Scripture to make it fit a preconceived pattern, or that Calvin's view of the Church owed nothing to Scripture. It is, however, to say that Calvin's reading of the ecclesiastical polity of Scripture

"which are founded upon God's authority, drawn from scripture, and, therefore, wholly divine."[252] He sees the early church as monolithic in structure, universally subject to the rule of councils of presbyters.[253]

According to his view of church history, the early church began as a loose organization of Christians, gathered around the apostles who proclaimed the gospel. As the community grew and the apostolic era drew to a close, it became necessary to designate one person in each community to proclaim the word and celebrate the sacraments. This person -- the "minister" or "bishop" (the terms are for him interchangeable) -- functioned according to authority delegated by the community as a whole.[254] The council of presbyters, who were gathered around the bishop, functioned in a

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itself owes a great deal to a theology and ecclesiology which are by no means exclusively scriptural, contrary to Calvin's own view" (pp. 107-108). Another useful work is Elsie McKee's Elders and the Plural Ministry: The Role of Exegetical History in Illuminating John Calvin's Theology (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1988), a most careful and intricate study of Calvin's exegetical methods with regard to orders of ministry. On pp. 63ff., McKee describes how Calvin practices selective exegesis in elevating the function of "administrators" higher than the other ministries in 1 Cor. 12:28 (healers, helpers and speakers in tongues), a practice she sees as typical of medieval exegesis.

[252]Institutes IV.10.30.

[253] Yet even Calvin recognizes a certain diversity of expression in the New Testament, making reference to the interchangeability of the terms "bishop," "presbyter," "pastor," and "minister" in scripture -- Institutes IV.3.8. It did not apparently occur to him that this interchangeability might have a very simple explanation -- namely the explanation we discovered in Chapter 1, that there were a variety of ministerial orders among the churches of the New Testament.

[254]Institutes IV.4.2.

similar fashion as they engaged in administrative oversight of the local church, as did the deacons in their dual function of managing alms distribution and performing ministries of sympathy and service. It was only later, in Calvin's view, that the church ascribed authority to individuals personally, as it developed the doctrine of apostolic succession by episcopal ordination. It is these later developments -- and not the original biblical-historical pattern, which he believes can readily be recovered -- that Calvin advises purging from the church.[255]

Calvin's approach to scripture is troubling to many in the late twentieth century. In his exegetical method, he is very much a product of his times, and it is difficult for modern observers to place themselves within his intellectual frame of reference. As McKee observes, however, it would be just as difficult for sixteenth-century Christians to accept some of the assumptions which modern scholars receive without question:

> The things which most shock twentieth-century scholars, such as the idea of Rom. 12:6-8 as a series of New Testament offices, or the conclusion that some offices in Eph. 4:11 and 1 Cor. 12:28 were temporary and others permanent, were not in fact upsetting or even startlingly novel to Calvin's contemporaries, though how Bucer and Calvin chose to argue from these ideas probably was so. On the other hand, ideas which post-Enlightenment thinkers accept naturally, for example "lay" ecclesiastical offices or the distinguishing in principle (at least, if not necessarily in practice) between offices of the church and those of Christian society, appeared unprecedented and dismaying in the sixteenth

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[255] Institutes IV.III.9.; IV.IV.1-3, 5, 10-11; IV.V.1-2.

century.[256]

Still, we have no other alternative than to acknowledge that Calvin is simply wrong in his exegetical approach, and therefore in the conclusions he draws from scripture about first-century ministerial order. The New Testament church did not have a universally recognized fourfold order of ministry, of the sort Calvin believes himself to be replicating in Geneva; as we have already seen in Chapter 1, there was little uniformity among the first-century churches in the way they ordered their ecclesiastical life. The solution to this problem, for twentieth-century Reformed theology, is to frankly acknowledge the limitations of Calvin's sixteenth-century worldview, and to endeavor to construct a theology of ordination that is yet faithful to Calvin's vision of service of the word. Such a theology of ordination will seek its justification not in its congruence with a first-century organizational chart (indeed, if one could be found to exist), but rather in faithfulness to Jesus' radical call to diakonia.

The Problem of Ecumenical Intelligibility

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[256]Elders and the Plural Ministry, p. 222. In John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving, pp. 145-146, McKee explains Calvin's willingness to consider "lay" ordination as arising out of a fundamental change in worldview. At the time Roman Catholic sacramental theology was being codified, most theologians assumed a sharp distinction between the "sacred" and the "profane." Ordination belonged to the sacred realm; it was the setting-apart of a person to perform sacred duties. By Calvin's time, the notion of the profane had been largely replaced by the idea of the "temporal." This led to a redefinition of ordination, whereby ordination to social ministries (as in Calvin's deacons) became a possibility.

Although Calvin is characteristically systematic in laying out his offices of ministry, his efforts to relate them to the threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon that came to the fore in the second and third centuries is less than satisfying, from the standpoint of modern scholarship. It is clear from his treatment of the church fathers -- particularly Ignatius and Cyprian -- that Calvin recognizes the fundamental validity of their approach; yet even so, he does not seem to feel a particular burden for conforming his Genevan ministerial order to the threefold pattern. According to Calvin's vision of ministry as service of the word, it is enough that there is an office of ministry by which the word is proclaimed and the sacraments celebrated. Other church offices have validity inasmuch as they support these vital tasks, or as they aid in the administration of ecclesiastical discipline.

The church in this last decade of the twentieth century finds itself in an era in which there is much to be gained from relating Calvin's offices of ministry to the threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon that has achieved such an impressive degree of ecumenical consensus; yet Calvin's ecclesiology defies any facile attempt to create a neat correspondence between Cyprian's offices and his own.

Calvin relates his office of ministry of the word to two offices that were present in the early church. These relationships are of interest to our study because they shed light on his essential understanding of ministerial ordination. On the one hand, Calvin seeks to make ministers of the word the equivalent of

the ancient bishops; and on the other, he endeavors to see them as "teaching elders."[257]

The first is evident as Calvin lists three characteristics of the bishop's office -- proclaiming the word, celebrating the sacraments, and exercising discipline -- all of which correspond to the usual functions of ministers of the word.[258] Throughout his writings, in fact, Calvin uses the words "pastor" and "bishop" interchangeably, unless he is referring to the Roman bishops of his day, whom he declares to be false.[259]

There are also examples of Calvin's understanding of ministers as "teaching elders," as opposed to "ruling elders." John McNeill has pointed out (quite correctly) that Calvin's use of this term presents "a terminological ambiguity of first-rate controversial possibilities."[260] R.W. Henderson has traced this ambiguity to

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[257] To some extent this is due to the fact that Calvin believes the earliest bishops to have been elected out of the council of presbyters (Institutes IV.4.2). As we have seen in Chapter One, however, ministerial order in the early church was not so homogeneous as Calvin and most of his contemporaries perceive it to have been.

[258] In Institutes IV.3.4, Calvin makes it clear that all three of these functions are included in the office of pastor; in IV.3.8 he observes that the third function, discipline, is shared with the elders.

[259] Institutes IV.3.8; IV.7.23. See John T. McNeill, "The Doctrine of the Ministry in Reformed Theology," in Church History, vol. XII., 1943, p. 81, and G.S.M. Walker, "Scottish Ministerial Order," in Scottish Journal of Theology, vol. 8, 1955, pp. 238-254. See also Institutes IV.3.6., in which Calvin traces apostolicity through the pastors, rather than through a corporate episcopate such as the presbytery.

[260] Institutes IV.4.1.; IV.5.8; IV.11.1,6. See also McNeill, "The Doctrine of the Ministry in Reformed Theology," p. 80.

Calvin's exegesis of 1 Timothy 5:17, which speaks of elders who are leaders and elders who "labor at preaching and teaching" -- a text which, on the one hand, is dated by modern scholars as much later than Calvin considered it to be (he saw it as genuinely Pauline), and which, on the other, is hardly meant to be a systematic expression of ministerial order at all.[261] This ambiguity has caused intractable difficulties for Reformed theology through the centuries, and has made it difficult for Reformed participants in modern ecumenical discussions to clearly articulate the theological underpinnings of their ministerial order.

A further difficulty, related to the foregoing, concerns Calvin's attitude toward bishops. On the one hand, Calvin roundly condemns the Roman bishops of his day; yet on the other, he speaks without apology of his Genevan ministers as the true bishops.

Calvin, as we have already observed, was not actually opposed to episcopacy, and was quite prepared to tolerate a limited form of it. On a number of occasions in the Institutes, he makes it clear that he is prepared to accept bishops who faithfully perform their duties -- preaching, celebrating the sacraments, and exercising discipline -- and who do not tread upon the prerogatives of the people to elect their own leaders.[262] In correspondence with Thomas Cranmer, the Duke of Somerset and the King of Poland, Calvin

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[261] "Concerning the Eldership, Part I," p. 368. Of the First Timothy 5:17 passage, Henderson observes: "...there are practically no modern [biblical] commentators, even among Presbyterians and Reformed, who believe the text is capable of sustaining the weight of interpretation given to it by Calvin."

[262] Institutes IV.4.4-5.; IV.5.1-2,11.; IV.7.23.; IV.10.6.

advises that in situations where episcopacy has not been seriously corrupted, it ought to be retained.[263]

There are three conditions under which Calvin says he is prepared to tolerate episcopacy: if (1) bishops perform their pastoral duties faithfully, (2) such episcopacy is not monarchical, and (3) such episcopacy makes no claim to stand in a line of apostolic succession as a distinct office in itself, higher in status than the office of minister of the word.[264]

Furthermore, Calvin sees it as essential that church governing bodies have a moderator to maintain order (whatever particular title that person is given), allowing for the weaknesses of human nature.[265] In this sense, every pastor is a bishop. What Calvin will not tolerate, under any circumstances, is a monarchical role for such a moderator.[266]

John Leith, following John McNeill, has summarized Calvin's attitude by observing that Calvin recognizes "a functional but not

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[263] See John T. McNeill, The History and Character of Calvinism, p. 217. For translations of these letters, see Letters of John Calvin, ed. Jules Bonnet (Edinburgh: Constable, 1857).

[264] Institutes IV.6.8,10.; IV.8.1.; IV.11.5-6,9.; "The Necessity of Reforming the Church," pp. 206ff. See also Benjamin Milner, Calvin's Doctrine of the Church, p. 147.

[265] Institutes IV.6.8.; Commentary on Philippians 1:1, in Calvin's Commentaries on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, p. 227. See also John T. McNeill, "The Doctrine of the Ministry in Reformed Theology," p. 83.

[266] Institutes, IV.6.10.; Commentary on Ephesians 4:11, in Calvin's Commentaries on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, p. 180; "Sermon on Ephesians 4:11-12," in Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, facsimile reprint of 1562 edition, 1973), p. 372. See also Geddes MacGregor, Corpus Christi, pp. 55-56.

a theological episcopacy."[267] In other words, as long as episcopacy does not undermine the theological principles of the lordship of Christ, the parity of ministries, or apostolic succession conceived as faithfulness to correct doctrine (as opposed to a succession of ordinations) -- and as long as it is functionally useful in promoting the peace and good order of the church -- it is to be commended.[268]

Conclusion

We began this chapter with a brief look at Luther's theology

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[267] Introduction to the Reformed Tradition (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977), p. 157; John T. McNeill, "The Doctrine of the Ministry in Reformed Theology." A theological episcopacy is the traditional Roman Catholic view, or the view of certain Anglicans, such as Kenneth Kirk et. al. in The Apostolic Ministry (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1946). In the Reformed tradition -- which has no room for a theological episcopacy of any sort -- debate has continued to take place on the question of whether even a functional episcopacy is compatible with Reformed ecclesiology. One side is represented by James L. Ainslie, The Doctrines of Ministerial Order in the Reformed Churches of the 16th and 17th Centuries (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1940), who argues that the Reformed tradition affords little leeway for episcopacy of any kind. The other side, represented by Jacques Pannier, Calvin et l'Épiscopat (Strasbourg: Librarie Istra, 1927) -- as well as by McNeill, Leith, G.D. Henderson in Presbyterianism (Aberdeen: University Press, 1954), and others -- argues that Calvin opposed not episcopacy per se, but only theological episcopacy. McNeill has rather convincingly refuted many of Ainslie's arguments, in his review of Ainslie's book in the Journal of Religion, vol. XXII, 1942, pp. 219-221. When the evidence is weighed, it is the view of Pannier, McNeill and the others that has more to commend it.

[268] That Calvin did not himself institute a functional episcopate in Geneva is not in itself an argument against that practice -- for Calvin lived at the conclusion of a lengthy struggle by the Swiss to rid themselves of corrupt episcopal rule. It is little wonder, in light of the recent history of the people he served, that Calvin was not eager to bring back a bishop to Geneva. See McNeill, The History and Character of Calvinism, pp. 14ff., 133.

of ordination, seeing how he defines a functional understanding of ministry in opposition to the official, "indelible-mark" theology that had come down from Augustine. Luther demonstrates no particular sense of urgency when it comes to codifying ordination practice; for him, it is calling, rather than ordination, that is at the heart of the matter. There are tasks to be fulfilled in the church, and Luther trusts the Holy Spirit to raise up leaders to fulfill those functions.

Luther's doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is central to his understanding of ministry. For this reason, baptism is for him far more important than ordination; every baptized Christian is, to Luther's way of thinking, a minister.

Calvin, on the other hand, as a second-generation reformer, is necessarily more concerned than Luther with the establishment and codification of ecclesiastical practice. His view of ministry tends to be more official than Luther's. Calvin's conception of ministry, however, is just as firmly founded on the New Testament concept of diakonia, or service, to Jesus Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Like the apostle Paul, Calvin demonstrates a charismatic and communal understanding of ministry. Ministry arises from the call and work of the Holy Spirit, and ministry is shared. Calvin understands the charismata for ministry as having been given for the upbuilding of the entire community. So "high" is Calvin's conception of the church, and of its ministry, that at times his understanding of ordination borders on the sacramental.

Three particular problems arise from Calvin's theology of ordination. First, there is a tension between Calvin's sometimes-functional and sometimes-official concept of ministry. The solution to this tension may be found in his image of the minister as steward. As stewards of the charismata necessary for proclaiming the word and celebrating the sacraments, ministers are servants of the Lord. As long as servanthood is kept at the fore, Calvin's theology of ministry avoids the pitfalls of excessive clericalism.

Second, we have seen how Calvin's exegetical method leads him to see a uniformity in first-century ministerial order that simply is not there; this results in a sometimes-surprising clericalism. Modern-day Reformed theologians, building on the heritage of Calvin, do well to remind themselves of the limitations of his exegetical method.

The third problem has to do with the way Calvin interchanges the terms "presbyter," "pastor" and "bishop." This results in a terminological confusion that makes it difficult for Reformed ministerial offices to be translated intelligibly into the language of other Christian ecclesiastical traditions.

For all his limitations, however, Calvin continues to be the single most significant theological influence, after scripture itself, on the Reformed understanding of ministry. Certain aspects of his thought are bound to the sixteenth century, but his overall vision of ministry as radical servanthood to Jesus Christ remains fresh and compelling.

In the next chapter, we will consider how the diakonia paradigm was carried forward into the Scottish reformation.

CHAPTER 4: ORDINATION IN THE SCOTTISH REFORMATION

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). As the New Testament begins with the word, so also did the Protestant reformation of the sixteenth century. Luther's reform was born in his rediscovery of scripture, particularly the letter to the Romans; he carried his renewed appreciation for scripture into a movement for scripture translation into the vernacular, producing his great German Bible. Calvin founded the Genevan reform on meticulous exegesis of biblical texts, producing a complete set of commentaries. Although those commentaries have long since been superseded by the insights of modern historical-critical method, they still stand as models of thoroughness and piety, particularly in the context of their own time. In Zürich, Zwingli evidenced his serious approach to scripture in his method of lexico continuo preaching, a model some follow to this day.

For John Knox, too, the word was central. It has been observed that for Knox the word is no static thing, but a matter of proclamation. Knox's preaching is driven by a lively sense of the word fairly bursting forth in proclamation, as over against a gentler homiletic or expository approach.[269] Knox's own sense of calling to ministry -- while a matter of some historical debate as

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[269]Richard L. Greaves, Theology and Revolution in the Scottish Reformation (Grand Rapids: Christian University Press, 1980), p. 66.

far as his own ordination is concerned -- was closely related to his identity as a preacher. Originally ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic church, when Knox cast in his lot with the reformers he let that ordination lapse (and was in fact later excommunicated). Several colleagues, including Henry Balnaves, John Rough and Sir David Lindsay, subsequently provided him with a call to preach -- even though in those early days there was no reformed church body to maintain him on its rolls. Although reluctant at first, Knox assented; and the rest is, as they say, history. His identity was soon to become so wrapped up in his call to preach that he could reply to the Lords of the Congregation in 1559, who were asking him to desist from preaching in St. Andrews:

> "I cannot of conscience: for in this town and church began God first to call me to the dignity of a preacher...from the which [office] most unjustly I was removed."[270]

It is the thesis of this paper that for Knox and the rest of the mainstream Scottish reformers, ministry emerges radically from the living word of God and continues in its structure and activity to serve that word. It is a "radical" emergence in the classic sense: the Latin radix means "root," and for Knox and his colleagues the root of ministry is God's word, which like a persistent plant keeps emerging despite the questionable soil of sinful humanity in which it is planted. Ministry is part of God's will for the church amidst fallen creation, but only insofar as it continues to serve the purposes for which it was created: the

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[270]Greaves, p. 72.

proclamation of the word and the celebration of the sacraments.

THE EMERGENCE OF MINISTRY FROM THE WORD

For much of its history, Scotland's affairs have been strongly influenced by its powerful and wealthy neighbor to the south, England. Yet in Scotland's ecclesiastical reform of the sixteenth century, little was imported from south of Hadrian's Wall. Much of the Scottish reformation was a genuine movement from the grassroots; those outside influences that were part of the scene were Continental rather than English.

This is somewhat remarkable, given the facts that Knox and his associates received much of their initial financial and military support from English sources, and that Knox himself had spent a number of years living in England. Yet there was undoubtedly also the potent political memory in the Scottish people of past struggles with the English. This -- coupled with the realization that English support for the Scottish reform was at least as much political as spiritual, given the ready opportunity for weakening the French interests -- would have militated against too great a dependence on English ecclesiastical patronage. This reluctance to identify too strongly with the English reform certainly had its effect on struggles a century later over efforts by the monarch of the United Kingdom to impose episcopacy on the Scots.

Generally, the Scottish reformers looked to Geneva rather than to England for the theological foundations of their movement. This is especially seen in the first distinctive work of Scottish

presbyterianism, the First Book of Discipline (1560), which bears strong parallels in a number of places to Calvin's Institutes.[271]

The First Book of Discipline is a thoroughly Calvinist document, bypassing English ecclesiastical polity almost completely and establishing a church order without precedent in the British Isles. It is especially notable that the authors of the First Book sought approval for their church order from Calvin, Viret and Beza in Geneva and from Martyr and Bullinger in Zürich, but did not apparently consult with English church leaders at all.[272]

Like Calvin's Genevan church order, which strongly emphasized the task of proclamation of the word as definitive for ministry, the First Book of Discipline is strongly founded on the theological concept of the word. The first "head," or section, of the book is titled "Of Doctrine," and asserts that the purpose for writing the book is "that [Christ's] Gospell be truely and openly preached in every Church and Assembly of this realme, and that all doctrine repugnant to the same, be utterly repressed as damnable to mans salvation."[273] Clearly, there was little difference, in the minds of the authors of the First Book, between doctrine as theology and doctrine as proclamation -- to them, doctrine belongs to the pulpit rather than to the university lecture hall.

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[271]James Kirk, in his commentary on The Second Book of Discipline (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1980), p. 8, cites a number of parallel sections in the Institutes, including IV.iii.8, IV.xi.6, IV.iii.15, IV.xii.2 and IV.iv.5.

[272]Kirk, p. 9.

[273]James K. Cameron, The First Book of Discipline (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1972), p. 87.

The First Book of Discipline in no way represents an intentional, well thought-out church order. Although the precise date of the final version of the book is somewhat uncertain, the bulk of it was likely composed in a hasty fashion in the same year as the Scots Confession (1560).[274] That period was characterized by great turmoil; in effect, both the Confession and the First Book of Discipline were composed "on the run," as Knox and the reformers dealt with the formidable political and military obstacles that were before them at the time. Gordon Donaldson makes much of the fact that a main principle implicit in the First Book is that of "expediency" -- indeed, that word is frequently used by the authors as justification for particular points of polity.[275] The authors simply did not have time to state explicit biblical or theological reasons for their decisions, but pressed on, convinced that the pressures of their time demanded at least a provisional church order, so God's people could receive the benefits of the proclamation of the word.

In fact, regular proclamation of the word (let alone celebration of the sacraments) was by no means commonplace in early sixteenth-century Scotland. Although there were plenty of church buildings, many of the benefices attached to those properties were being collected by absentee priests who rarely, if ever, visited

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[274]Gordon Donaldson briefly deals with the book's composition in The Scottish Reformation (Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 53-54; a more detailed account is in Cameron's commentary on the First Book, pp. 3ff.

[275]The Scottish Reformation, p. 78.

their charges. The buildings themselves were in a poor state of repair. As a result, the reformers were faced with more than merely an opportunity for innovation; they faced a crisis of leadership and finances as well -- substantial liabilities for a new church.

It is no surprise, therefore, that the early transitional church order of the First Book of Discipline differs greatly from the presbyterian polity of today. In many ways, the First Book is concerned only with the local level of ecclesiastical government; little is said of church assemblies beyond the kirk-session (It is this concentration on local affairs, along with the continued presence for a while of a few of the bishops who supported the reforms, that leads Gordon Donaldson to describe the functioning church order of Knox's day as "congregationalism with a dash of episcopacy").[276] The concern driving the book is a need to get on with the work of the church in ministering to the common people; matters of higher governing body organization are either assumed to be common knowledge or are deferred for later consideration.

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[276]Scotland: Church and Nation Through Sixteen Centuries (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 63. Donaldson is unfortunately a little too eager in his search for episcopacy in the sixteenth-century Scottish reformed church, but the statement quoted here is substantially correct as far as the compromises necessary for the day-to-day continuation of church life were concerned. Except when imposed by outside authority (in which case the Presbyterians showed a remarkable capacity for tolerance), episcopacy was more the exception than the rule in sixteenth-century post-reformation Scotland. Knox himself, along with all those who wrote The First Book of Discipline, would clearly have been uncomfortable with the phrase, "congregationalism with a dash of episcopacy." Even though for our purposes the phrase may be an accurate description of the ways the kirk was forced to function, it is far from the design of either the First or the Second Book of Discipline.

The confusion continued long beyond the days of the First Book of Discipline; the Scottish reformation, in fact, took at least a century to complete its formative stage. This complexity is too often obscured by a somewhat romantic view that sees presbyterianism springing full-grown from the writings of Knox (or Melville), as Athena was born from the head of Zeus.

The confusion continued through the next significant development: the Second Book of Discipline (1578). Although that book has traditionally been attributed to Andrew Melville, it was in fact composed by a committee of thirty or more.[277] Although Melville was involved in the writing, his contribution lay particularly in fighting for the adoption of the book in the turbulent decades that followed its composition.[278]

Several circumstances caused the need for a fuller exposition of the principles of Reformation polity than had been the case in

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[277]James Kirk, in his previously cited commentary on that book, makes a convincing case that the book was a true communal effort, and that any source criticism seeking to attribute passages to particular authors necessarily fails because of lack of evidence (pp. 45-46, 51ff.). Typical of the oversimplified view that names Melville as the principal author (and therefore the author of presbyterianism as well) is this grandiose statement of Gordon Donaldson's: "...the John Knox of mythology is very largely compounded of the Andrew Melville of history, for it was Melville and not Knox who was the originator of Scottish presbyterianism" (Scotland: Church and Nation Through Sixteen Centuries, p. 71).

[278]As Kirk says, "Melville's influence, which was by no means negligible, lay rather in his ability to apply those earlier tenets of Reformed thought at a time when the crown was actively engaged in a concentrated effort to recover that control and initiative in ecclesiastical matters which it had lost in the Reformation" (Second Book of Discipline commentary, p. 52).

the First Book of Discipline.[279] First, the crown had moved -- over the vigorous opposition of Knox and others -- to retain as much as one-third of the income from ecclesiastical benefices for the treasury. A clearer exposition of the methods of financial support for parish ministers was needed, especially considering the still-desperate need for preachers in smaller towns and country areas. Second, several royal appointments of bishops without consultation with the General Assembly rankled in the minds of the church leadership.[280] Third, these episcopal appointments raised disturbing questions about the separation of church and state (or lack of it), for episcopal appointments in that day also included a seat in parliament -- an appointment the crown was loath to delegate to the General Assembly or to other elected church leadership. The fourth factor was the Convention of Leith in January 1572 -- a conciliatory council of church leaders and royal delegates that had been intended to bring peace, but which ended up setting aside some of the principles of the First Book of Discipline. The decisions of the convention were ultimately rejected by both Knox and the General Assembly. The fifth contributing factor was the active attempts by the Regents Mar and

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[279]These are described in more detail in Kirk's commentary on The Second Book of Discipline, pp. 14ff.

[280]The matter of episcopacy in the period under consideration will be dealt with later in this paper. For the present, however, it is necessary to observe that practical considerations -- most notably the reality that three pre-reformation bishops had joined Knox's camp, and that to ask them to demit their consecrations would have injected a note of disunity into the movement -- resulted in the persistence of bishops for a time, alongside the superintendents called for in The First Book of Discipline.

Morton to overturn actions of the General Assembly by personal fiat. These efforts were most intense from 1573-1576; yet, worn down by the opposition, in that latter year Morton effectively admitted defeat, issuing a message to the General Assembly that that body ought either to accept the recommendations of the Leith Convention or devise its own system of ecclesiastical government. Not surprisingly, the Assembly chose to compose its own plan of government, and appointed the committee that was to author the Second Book of Discipline.

Yet even with the Second Book in place, ecclesiastical uniformity was far distant from the Scottish scene. With episcopal representation in parliament basic to the civil government of the United Kingdom, bishops continued to be appointed, and in many cases to coexist with the presbyterian church government. Just a few short years after the Second Book of Discipline, the "Black Acts" of 1584 institutionalized a refusal to recognize the independence of the kirk from the civil government, and reasserted the right of the crown to appoint bishops.

Yet on the grass-roots level, in ways that hardly seem possible today, the reality of bishops melded into the day-to-day actions of kirk sessions, "eldarschips" (similar to presbyteries), synods and general assembly:

> In early sixteenth-century Scotland, then, we find the bishop-in-presbytery, we find the introduction of an episcopate, impeccably consecrated, without the reordination of men in presbyterian orders, we find recognition accorded by the Church of England to a church with a ministry not entirely episcopally ordained, a church which did not have 'the threefold ministry,' as Anglicans understand it, a church where confirmation by

> a bishop was unknown. Presbyterianism and episcopacy may be based on irreconcilable principles, but if it is possible to achieve a working compromise between the two, such a compromise was achieved in that period.... Scotland, which has been such an example of disunity, narrowly missed becoming a model of unity.[281]

A number of practical examples may be cited of cooperation between bishops and representative presbyterian bodies.[282] Although routine disciplinary cases were usually handled by presbyteries, bishops sometimes served as a one-person court of appeals. Bishops would also occasionally visit parishes in order to conduct routine disciplinary reviews -- but nowhere in Scotland is there evidence of the sort of episcopal confirmation tour that was common in England (confirmation was unknown in post-reformation

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[281]Gordon Donaldson, Scotland: Church and Nation Through Sixteen Centuries, p. 79. This quotation admirably illustrates the chaotic diversity of ecclesiastical polity in Scotland at the close of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth. Yet it seems that Donaldson assumes much more order in the midst of the chaos than probably was there. For example, he assumes that "bishop-in-presbytery" was an intentional office -- and not merely an accident of proximity, as royally-appointed bishops and elected General Assembly commissioners discovered themselves to be strange bedfellows. In portraying the kirk's ministry as "not entirely episcopally ordained," Donaldson also gives the probably mistaken impression that most Scottish ministers had received the laying on of hands by a bishop, rather than by a presbytery -- or by no one at all (according to the pattern of the First Book of Discipline, which proscribes the rite and in fact speaks of "admission" rather than "ordination"). Donaldson's closing comment, too, is somewhat misleading. From the particular viewpoint of Donaldson as an advocate of the "bishop-in-presbytery" proposal that to some in the late 1950s promised common ground for a union of the Church of Scotland and the Church of England, the coexistence of bishops may seem like an orderly mutual tolerance; in fact, the continuing strife of the period demonstrates otherwise (an earlier edition of Donaldson's book bears a publication date of 1960, close to the time of the "bishops-in-presbytery" controversy).

[282]Some of these from a slightly later period are enumerated by Walter Ronald Foster, Bishop and Presbytery: The Church of Scotland 1661-1688 (London: SPCK, 1958), pp. 42ff.

Scotland).[283] In later years, however, the practice of visiting churches came increasingly to be seen as the responsibility of the presbytery.

In the early part of the seventeenth century, however, the bishops seemed to be growing in authority. Friction between these royal appointees and presbyterian elements in the church leadership resulted in the National Covenant, whose signatories condemned certain secular abuses associated with English influence, as well as the use of the English prayer book (which encouraged such liturgical practices as kneeling to receive the Lord's Supper). Nine months after the National Covenant, the 1638 Glasgow Assembly (the first General Assembly since 1618, called with Charles' permission) voted to abolish episcopacy. Although the king's commissioner immediately declared the assembly dissolved, the assembly went on sitting, and passed a number of other reforming acts. The king's response was to send an army to Scotland, which did not succeed in quelling the revolt.

Meanwhile, the Long Parliament in England had begun its insurrection. In 1643, the hard-pressed parliament passed the Solemn League and Covenant, a document written by Scots which affirmed parliament's support for the Scottish church reforms. In exchange, the English gained the military intervention of the covenanting armies, which crossed the border and turned the tide of war against the king.

The Solemn League and Covenant "envisaged the creation of a

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[283]Foster, p. 58.

British church on the presbyterian-puritan model."[284] Liturgically, the Covenanters went further than Knox and the early Scottish reformers, denouncing the use in worship of such things as the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments. The apotheosis of the covenanting sentiment can in some respects be seen in the Westminster Assembly -- a congress which, it has often been noted, was almost exclusively English in membership, but whose influence was much more strongly felt in Scotland than in England in subsequent years.

Not many years after the victory of presbyterianism and puritanism, the restoration of Charles II changed the situation completely. The effects of the change in government were soon felt in Scottish church life -- one of the clearest examples being certain changes made in the life of presbyteries.

Since well before the reformation, regular meetings of clergy (and perhaps some laity) called "exercises" had taken place. Exercises were primarily study groups, by which preachers increased their facility at exegesis and doctrinal debate. Some exercises, however, took on quasi-judicial functions, helping individual ministers to settle difficult disciplinary cases. It is easy to see how pre-reformation exercises and reformation presbyteries grew more and more like each other, until in 1579 the General Assembly ruled that "the exercise be judged a presbytery."[285] With the

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[284]Donaldson, Scotland: Church and Nation Through Sixteen Centuries, pp. 84-85.

[285]Foster, Bishop and Presbytery, pp. 70ff.

restoration, however, presbyteries were sharply restricted. Membership was limited to ministers only. Presbytery moderators were no longer elected, but appointed by bishops (who had been restored by the crown). Charles also decided not to revive the General Assembly, which had been dissolved by Cromwell.

The year 1662 brought renewed difficulties for Presbyterians in Scotland. In that year the "Act for Restitution and Re-establishment of the Ancient Government of the Church by Archbishops and Bishops" was passed by parliament. This act, popularly known as the "Test Act," required ministers to recognize episcopacy, as well as asserting the right of the crown to exert influence over church affairs. Significantly, the act did not require ministers who had not been episcopally ordained to undergo re-ordination.[286] Large numbers of ministers, particularly in the southwest, refused to conform to the act all the same.[287] Conflict raged for years after that, sometimes bloodily, as the covenanters rose up in rebellion. By 1679, however, the defeat of the covenanting forces at Bothwell Brig effectively quieted the rebellion, at least in its overt manifestations.

Modified episcopacy as expressed in the Test Act might have prevailed in Scotland were it not for James VII, who so ineptly handled his reign that he lost his throne. James promulgated an

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[286]There were a few instances of re-ordination, but according to Foster these were rare (Bishop and Presbytery, pp. 102ff.).

[287]Foster estimates that 250-300 ministers (out of a total of 900 or so in all of Scotland) refused to conform to the act (Bishop and Presbytery, p. 5).

act of toleration that applied to Presbyterians (which was acceptable); yet the act also applied toleration to Roman Catholics, which was too much for the Presbyterians to abide. It happened that at the same time James had been equally effective in alienating his English subjects; his flight abroad and subsequent replacement by William and Mary were welcomed by the Scots, who had by now become a nation inflamed against "popery."

It was the misfortune of the Scottish bishops, just prior to James' downfall, to have issued a document referring to James as "the darling of heaven"; consequently, the people were angered against the bishops as well. When a Scottish convention of estates (a sort of rump parliament) voted to offer William and Mary the crown of Scotland, the convention also adopted a declaration that "prelacy, and the superiority of any office in the church above presbyters, is and hath been a great and insupportable grievance and trouble to this nation, ever since the Reformation, and therefore ought to be abolished."[288] Perhaps not seeing any alternative -- the elimination of their offices having been called for -- the Scottish bishops continued to support James' claim to the throne. That action turned William against them: although the king had previously been disposed to continue modified episcopacy in Scotland, in 1690 he approved a statute restoring the presbyterian system.

Donaldson suggests that the establishment of presbyterianism

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[288]Gordon Donaldson, Scotland: Church and Nation Through Sixteen Centuries, pp. 90-91.

in 1690 was purchased at a terrible price for the heirs of Knox and Melville: for it institutionalized the understanding that the church was not independent of the state, and that the state therefore had no longer any obligation to recognize or support the disciplinary or judicial decisions of church bodies. Furthermore, it had now officially been determined that presbyterianism existed not by divine right and scriptural mandate, but because parliament had deemed it an agreeable form of ecclesiastical governance.[289]

This brief historical survey has served to demonstrate the volatile nature of Scottish ecclesiastical affairs during the years 1560-1690, and the similar diversity of ecclesiological ideas that underlaid the structural changes. Presbyterianism gradually emerged during that period of more than a century, and its emergence was uneven and frequently painful. Neither Knox nor Melville nor anyone else conceived a master plan for the presbyterian Church of Scotland that ultimately prevailed; the church structure established by parliament in 1690, while rooted in the pioneering work of the authors of both Books of Discipline, was the product of a highly complex process of compromise.

Yet even so, when we turn our attention to the concept of ordination to ministry of the word, several foundational concepts can be identified as present even in the earliest days.

Apostolicity

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[289]Scotland: Church and Nation Through Sixteen Centuries, pp. 92ff.

The first of these is apostolicity. All the Protestant reformers, as soon as they decided to break with the existing church order, were faced with the question of apostolic authority. Having by their actions repudiated the Roman view that apostolic succession is vested in an unbroken chain of episcopal ordinations going back to the apostle Peter, the reformers had to come up with an alternative. Without an explanation of the apostolicity of their movement, they would potentially have been subject to all manner of schismatic groups, each feeling at liberty to break with the main movement at the slightest hint of disagreement.

The distinctive reformed view that emerged is that the minister of the word has all that is needful for transmission of the apostolic faith; no higher episcopal authority is needed. The test of authenticity is in the preacher's fidelity to scripture. Apostolic succession is seen not as a succession of ordinations, but as a succession of faithful proclamations of the Christian kerygma. The message that is handed on from generation to generation in the apostolic church is fundamentally the same as the message of the apostles.

Knox clearly states this view in a 1568 response to a letter from James Tyrie, in which he describes those in true apostolic succession as having "remanit and yet remaneth in the original puritie of the Apostlis, in doctrine, lyfe, lawes and ceremonies."[290] Later in the same letter Knox expresses his

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[290]John Knox, "An Answer To a Letter of a Jesuit, Named Tyrie, be Johne Knox," in Works, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh: Thomas George Stevenson, 1864), vol. VI, p. 488.

conviction that Christ...

> ...sendes not his afflicted Kirk to seak a lineal succession of any persones befoir that he will receave them; but he, with all gentilnes calleth his sheap unto him self, saying, "Cum unto me all ye that labour and are laden, and I will ease yow." And agane, "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I cast not away." O golden and moste comfortable sentence, pronounced of him who cannot lie! Heir is no mention of any succession that we should clame to, befoir that we be receaved of him who is the Head of the Kirk....And yet, least that the wryter, or any other, should think themselves rather mocked then answered, we ade to the premises, That we are able to shaw the succession of our Kirk directly and laughfully to have flowed from the Apostles. And our reason is, becaus that in our kirkis we nether admit doctrine, ryte, nor ceremonie, which be their wrytingis, we find not authorized.[291]

A practical implication of this understanding of apostolicity may be seen in how the church of Knox's day handled the question of validity -- that is, what was to be done with the episcopally ordained priests who were already in the land. Calvin helped Knox face this problem, writing to Knox in 1559 about the monks and priests who were not actively serving congregations according to the Reformed understanding, but who were still receiving income from the church. Calvin is remarkably pastoral in his reply:

> It is true that subsistence is not due to monks and priests from a public source, in order that they may live in useless ease. If any therefore are fit to edify the church, let them be called to labour therein. But, seeing they are for the most part unlearned and destitute of all skill, we think they should be humanely dealt with. For, although those who give none of their labour to the church have no right to claim their maintenance, yet, since they have ensnared themselves through ignorance and error, and have spent part of their life in idleness, it were hard that they should be totally

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[291]Knox, "An Answer To a Letter of a Jesuit, Named Tyrie," in Works, vol. VI, pp. 497-498.

> deprived of it. They ought, indeed, be admonished rather to seek their living by honest labour than to consume what has been allotted to the ministers of the church, and to the poor.[292]

It is clear that Calvin in no way recognizes the prior ordinations as having conferred an "indelible mark" on the recipients, or as having any sacramental character.[293] Indeed, Calvin says quite explicitly that authority in the church belongs to the ministry, not to the person (Institutes IV.15.16; IV.2.11). On the other hand, prior ordination in the Roman church does not disqualify a person from ministry (indeed, Calvin himself -- and perhaps Knox also -- would have been disqualified by such a criterion).[294] The most important consideration was whether the candidate could be seen as being "fit to edify the church," having

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[292]John Calvin, Letter to Knox of 8 November, 1559, in John Knox, Works, vol. VI, p. 98.

[293]The concept of the "indelible mark" conferred in ordination is a hallmark of Roman Catholic (and some Anglican) ordination theologies.

[294]The question of Knox's own ordination has been much debated by historians. Little is known of his pre-Reformation ordination, and there is some uncertainty as to the particular office to which he was ordained. Knox did not apparently seek to be re-ordained (appropriately enough, since the First Book of Discipline contains no provision for ordination, speaking instead of admission to the preaching ministry). As G.D. Henderson has observed, however, once Knox was excommunicated his ordination was a moot point -- Church and Ministry (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951), p. 156. At any rate, it is clear that Knox recognized apostolic succession to be centered in the correct transmission of doctrine (see notes on Knox's reply to Tyrie, above). Henderson goes on to point out that "Reformed Church people in those days were not thinking about validity, and merely assumed that things in this respect went on as before as far as was needed, the responsible authorities taking any necessary steps in each case. The real issue was that fresh and additional demands were being made of those who were to be ministers, and these thrust the question of validity into the background" (p. 157).

the educational qualifications, piety and personal conduct necessary for proclamation of the word, thereby joining in the apostolic succession of Christian kerygma.

In most matters connected with ministry, the Reformed church of Scotland in its early years operated with a marked disregard for the necessity of a finely tuned church order (an interesting contrast to presbyterian churches today, where "polity fundamentalism" is too often a problem). G. D. Henderson describes the flexibility of that era:

> It would seem as if those who, under the new conditions, found themselves responsible for work formerly committed to bishops simply did the work without discussing the precise rights of the matter. A superintendent or a presbytery took over certain functions, as Kirk Sessions or town councils had undertaken others. There was no break in the continuity of need. Discipline had to be administered; ministers had to be ordained. Theories came later. The striking thing is how little they appear to have worried about such questions, until someone outside began to criticise.[295]

Henderson goes on to point out that later, as some came to value theories of apostolicity through ordination as more desirable, one of two viewpoints sometimes pertained. One was to see apostolicity as preserved in the presbytery's authorization for ordinations, and not in the particular personnel who performed the rite. Such a view held that, according to Calvin's conception of early church order that hypothesized a pastor-bishop surrounded by presbyters, it had always been the presbytery that authorized ordinations anyway, and that the bishop only acted on behalf of the presbytery. Another competing view admitted that although the lack

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[295]Church and Ministry, pp. 151ff.

of bishops to perform ordinations in the Reformed church was a defect, it did not destroy the reality of the church -- that, in a fashion parallel to the solution to the Donatist problem, the grace of God made everything all right in the end. This was the view of the Anglican-leaning "Aberdeen Doctors."[296]

Yet even though some later theories of apostolicity through ordination sprang up, the foundational understanding of the Reformers is that the authority of the church's kerygma springs directly from God's word.[297] It is the word that fuels proclamation, and the necessity of proclamation leads God to call ministers. Henderson adds these words as an important corrective to any who would emphasize too strongly the retroactive justification of a preaching ministry that is already in place:

> Perhaps, however, in all this discussion we have adopted too readily the traditional backward look. The word "apostolic" in the early days referred not more to general authority than to definite commission. The Apostles were "sent" as their title indicates. Ministers today must not only have proper credentials, but must do the work of an Apostle. Their succession is in duty even more than in office. But it must farther be recalled that in the Nicene Creed it is the Church, and not merely

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[296]Henderson, Church and Ministry, pp. 151ff.

[297]For the Reformers, questions of interpretation of scripture were less prominent than for subsequent generations. Both Calvin and Knox operated from a generally literalistic exegetical method. This is seen in Calvin's Institutes I.7.1-2, as well as in the following quotation from Knox's History of the Reformation in Scotland: "Ye shall believe God...that planelie speaketh in his word: and farther than the word teaches you, ye neather shall believe the ane or the other. The word of God is plane in the self, and yf thair appear any obscuritie in one place, the Holy Ghost, whiche is never contrariouse to him self, explanes the same more clearly in other places: so that thair can remane no doubt, but unto suche as obstinatlie remane ignorant" (Works, vol. II, p. 284).

> the clergy, to whom the word "apostolic" is applied. The people of God are chosen to bear witness and to serve. The word has a most decided forward intention for both ministers and laity.[298]

It is well to remember Henderson's admonition as we investigate the matter of apostolic authority in the church's ministry. Whenever the church loses its forward-looking evangelical character and begins looking back to discover proof of its own authority, it will, like the wife of Lot, become hardened and lifeless. The authority of ministry cannot be separated from the dynamic word. The word is both the task of ministry (in the sense that ministers serve the word, bearing and interpreting it) and its justification (in the sense that the Reformers saw ministry as mandated in scripture (see Calvin, Institutes IV.1.11; IV.3.2).

Ordination

The second foundational concept to be considered is that of ordination itself. As we have seen, the First Book of Discipline contains no concept of ordination at all; it is not until the Second Book that we see anything like the modern presbyterian understanding of ordination emerging.

It is well known that Calvin expressed reluctance about ordination, thinking it better that the laying on of hands be avoided, in order that no one would fall into superstitious interpretations of that rite. The same idea was in the minds of the authors of the First Book of Discipline. The book speaks only

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[298]Church and Ministry, p. 163.

of the "admission" of ministers to preach the gospel; beyond that, other liturgical observances are to be avoided:

> Other ceremonie than the publick approbation of the people, and declaration of the chiefe minister, that the person there presented is appointed to serve the church, wee cannot approve, for albeit the Apostles used imposition of hands, yet seeing the miracle is ceased, the using of the ceremonie wee judge not necessarie.[299]

Likewise, the Scots Confession contains no mention of ordination. The closest thing to a theology of ordination is a statement found in the section on the sacraments -- which, the Confession says, "...should be ministered by lawful ministers, and we declare that these are men appointed to preach the Word, unto whom God has given the power to preach the gospel, and who are lawfully called by some Kirk" (Chapter XXII).

The laying on of hands soon returned to official church practice, however -- first (implicitly) with the General Assembly's adoption of the Helvetic Confession of 1566, which endorses the rite, and then with the Second Book of Discipline, which explicitly calls for ordination in that fashion. The more important insight for us at this point in our investigation is what the kirk's willingness to dispense with the rite for a time says about the underlying theology of ordination (we will consider the laying on of hands itself more explicitly below). James Kirk's analysis of this theology of ordination in the Second Book is cogent:

> Certainly, in Scotland what spiritual grace a candidate possessed was thought to be observable before his admission in his performance on the exercise [the examination by the presbytery] and not to be the product

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[299]The First Book of Discipline, p. 102.

> of any ordination ceremony. The imposition of hands was not held to convey the gifts of the Holy Spirit but acted only as a recognition and seal of the spiritual gifts already present.[300]

Kirk goes on to point out that the primary aspect of the early Reformed understanding of ordination was not the imposition of hands, but the idea of vocation and the two aspects of the call to ministry: "the calling of God and inward testimony of guid conscience" and "the lauchfull approbatioun and outward jugement of men according to Goddis word and order establischid in his kirk."[301]

It is apparent that the setting-apart of a person for ministry, in the view of the founders of the Scottish reformation, is primarily the work of God, who is actively moving in the world to insure that the divine word is proclaimed. That is why the First Book of Discipline is so sketchy on procedures for the election of ministers and their ordination. The only real detail present has to do with procedures for examination, by which the kirk makes certain that the word being preached by a candidate is indeed God's word. For the authors of the First Book, there is no cause to worry over the raising up of preachers to proclaim the gospel -- for God will raise up whom God will raise up, and the task for the kirk is to identify those whom God has called, separating the truly called from those who would preach a false gospel. Although the shortage of ministers in Scotland in the

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[300]The Second Book of Discipline, pp. 72-73.

[301]The Second Book of Discipline, commentary p. 73 and text p. 178.

latter part of the sixteenth century was severe, the leaders of the Reformed church did not stint on the rigorous intellectual preparation, intense spiritual discipline and austere personal lifestyle they required of all whom they approved to preach. Indeed, the early practice of permitting "readers" to conduct services in churches without ministers -- services consisting only of the Book of Common Prayer and readings from scripture -- speaks of their preference for no preacher at all over a poorly qualified one.[302] For the Reformers, ministry is service to the word; the only meaning ordination has in and of itself is in enabling the word to be heard and the sacraments to be celebrated.

The Notes of the Kirk

This brings us to the reformed understanding of the marks of the church (or the "notes of the kirk," to use the language of the Scots Confession). This is the third persistent idea related to ministry which it is important to identify.

The classical marks of the church, dating back at least as far as the Nicene Creed of 381, are unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity. It is highly significant that the Scottish Reformers choose to develop not these classical marks, but the comparatively new marks identified by Calvin: word and sacrament.

Furthermore, they add a third mark, discipline:

> The notes of the true Kirk, therefore, we believe, confess, and avow to be: first, the true preaching of the Word of God, in which God has revealed himself to us, as

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[302]The First Book of Discipline, pp. 105ff.

> the writings of the prophets and apostles declare; secondly, the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, with which must be associated the Word and promise of God to seal and confirm them in our hearts; and lastly, ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God's Word prescribes, whereby vice is repressed and virtue nourished.[303]

It is significant that, by including the third note of the kirk, the Scottish reformers have made it impossible for ministry to embody the entire nature of the church. The first two notes are held in stewardship by those ordained as ministers, but the third belongs to the elders. Therefore, the church is not the church in the person of a priest performing a private mass, as ordained to do so by a bishop; the church is only the church as a corporate body, with stewardship for the notes of the church shared among those gifted for proclaiming the word and celebrating the sacraments on the one hand, and for maintaining ecclesiastical discipline on the other. This is seen particularly in the Second Book of Discipline's description of the duties of the "eldarschip," (a corporate body that is an ancestor of both session and presbytery):

> It pertenis to the eldarschip to tak heid that the word of God be puirlie preachit within thair boundis, the sacramentis rychtlie ministrat, the discipline mentenid and the ecclesiastical guidis uncorruptlie distribute.[304]

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[303]Scots Confession, chapter XVIII, in the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Part 1: Book of Confessions (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 1993).

[304]Second Book of Discipline, p. 200. The concept of the "eldarschip" is a rather fluid one, having similarities to both the kirk session and presbytery. In these early years before the higher governing bodies were organized, the eldership was in some places more like a session and in others more like a presbytery. In larger towns, the eldership was an assembly of elders from a

In this passage, stewardship of all three notes of the kirk is assigned to the eldership, along with the distribution of "ecclesiasticall guidis," or money. No one order of ministry has exclusive oversight of the notes of the kirk, but only the corporate body. Ordination becomes the way in which the body of Christ assigns a particular duty to a portion of its membership. In this way, ordination is intimately related to the mission of the church; it is a function rather than an office.

We have seen, then, how the presbyterian understanding of ordination emerged unevenly during the turbulent period from 1560-1690. Strongly influenced by the Continental reformation, Knox, Melville and others were concerned primarily that a church that had been weakened by centuries of neglect experience anew the regular preaching of God's word. Consequently, their doctrine of ordination (implicit in their church order) grows out of their conception of a dynamic word, actively interjecting itself into the world. So important was this principle that other matters of ecclesiology could reasonably be settled according to a criterion of expediency. Through the confusion of the period, however, several key ideas asserted themselves, which were to become

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particularly sizeable congregation, with their minister. Some of these elderships would include among their membership elders from neighboring smaller churches, who in some cases might be the only elders in their congregations -- making that eldership perform more of the functions of a presbytery, visiting the outlying churches and overseeing their work and mission. The Second Book in fact advises smaller churches not to organize their own elderships: "...not ane assemblie of eldaris in every particular kirk, bot onlie in the townis and famous places quhair resort of men of jugement and habilitie to that office may be had" (p. 231).

foundational for the presbyterian church order that eventually emerged. These are: the idea of apostolic authority based on right doctrine rather than right ordination; ordination as functional rather than official; and the essential nature of the church ("the notes of the kirk") being seen more truly in the corporate body than in individual officeholders.

We now move on to consider the character of the emerging presbyterian model of ministry: concentrating particularly on ministry of the word, but with some consideration also of doctors, elders and deacons.

THE EMERGING PRESBYTERIAN MODEL OF MINISTRY

In this section we will consider first the various orders of ministry instituted from 1560-1690, and then three topics related particularly to ministers of the word: calling and admission, ordination by the laying on of hands and the duties of ministers. Finally, we will look more closely at the problem of bishops.

Orders of Ministry

The First Book of Discipline, beginning as it does with two "heads" on Doctrine (word) and Sacraments, is primarily concerned with ministry of the word. In addition to ministers, there is also some brief treatment, under the section dealing with ministers, of "readers" and "exhorters," itinerant "superintendents" who assist the presbyteries with oversight of churches and elders and deacons (whose duties are described in a section following the seventh

head, "Of Ecclesiastical Discipline," the note of the kirk for which elders have particular stewardship).[305] There is no mention in the First Book of the order of doctor, although the section on universities speaks in great detail of readers (university instructors, rather than the readers who served in parishes), rectors and principals.[306] It is possible that this reflects an implicit understanding that doctoral or teaching functions need to be performed by individuals who have been particularly gifted for that purpose.[307]

The First Book devotes more attention to ministers than to any other ecclesiastical office. This is primarily due to the principle of expediency which drives the First Book of Discipline: since the most pressing problem confronting the kirk at the time was the need to restore the proclamation of the word at the parish level throughout Scotland, the order responsible for that function receives the most attention. Since we will deal with the order of minister of the word in more detail below, in the remainder of this section we will consider the other ecclesiastical offices.

Readers and exhorters also assist with the proclamation of the word. Due to the shortage of university-trained ministers who advocated reformation principles, it was expedient for the framers

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[305]Cameron, First Book, pp. 105ff., 115ff.

[306]Pp. 138ff.

[307]For a very thorough treatment of the office of doctor in Scottish presbyterianism, see Robert W. Henderson, The Teaching Office in the Reformed Tradition (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), chapter 6.

of the First Book to provide for readers of "common prayers" for parishes that did not have a preaching minister. As we have already seen, these common-prayer services would consist of prayers from the service-book, scripture lessons and selections from a collection of published homilies.[308] Exhorters were readers who "...of long time have professed Christ Jesus, whose honest conversation deserveth praise of all godly men, and whose knowledge also might greatly helpe the simple...[who]...must be animated, and by gentle admonition encouraged by some exhortation to comfort their brethren, and so they may be admitted to administration of the sacraments..."[309] More than mere readers of printed services, the exhorters were effectively admitted to the functions of ministers -- proclaiming the word, celebrating the sacraments and performing weddings -- although they were not required to have the same educational credentials as ministers. The office of exhorter quickly disappeared, however -- perhaps because of discomfort at the ambiguous relationship between that office and that of ministers.[310]

Superintendents are a central feature of the First Book of

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[308]Gordon Donaldson, Church and Nation Through Sixteen Centuries, p. 55.

[309]Cameron, First Book, p. 106.

[310]Donaldson suggests that the disappearance of the office of exhorter was due to a 1572 change which extended to readers permission to perform marriages and baptisms (Scotland: Church and Nation Through Sixteen Centuries, p. 55). Since the Lord's Supper was rarely celebrated more frequently than once a year -- and therefore could be provided by visiting ministers -- the ordinary needs of a local church could therefore be met by readers.

Discipline, with a separate section devoted to that office.[311] Superintendents are an "expedient" solution to the problem of how to provide administrative oversight for Scottish churches, in the absence of bishops.[312] Superintendents are to have "charge and commandment...to plant and erect Kirkes, to set, order, and appoint ministers...to the Countries that shall be appointed to their care where none are now."[313] Each superintendent is to have a "diocese."[314] Yet it is clear that, although superintendents may be functionally similar to bishops, they are in essence quite different:

> Those men must not be suffered to live as your idle Bishops have done heretofore; neither must they remaine where gladly they would, but they must be preachers themselves, and such as may not make long residence in any place till their Kirkes be planted and provided of Ministers, or at the least of Readers. Charge must be given to them that they remain in no place above twenty daies in their visitation, till they have passed through their whole bounds. They must thrice everie week preach at the least; and when they return to their principall Towne and Residence, they must likewise be exercised in preaching and edification of the Kirke...[315]

The book goes on to describe how superintendents are to be continually engaged in examining "the life, diligence and behaviour

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[311]J.K. Cameron, in his commentary on the First Book of Discipline (pp. 49ff.), makes a strong case for the theory that this section was not part of the original draft of the book, but was probably added a year or so later, as the kirk was wrestling with the problem of how to keep churches supplied with leadership and oversight during the shortage of ministers.

[312]Cameron, First Book, p. 115.

[313]P. 115.

[314]P. 116.

[315]P. 122.

of the Ministers, [and] also the order of the kirkes, the manners of the people," as well as provisions for the poor and for education.[316] More constraints are specified for this office than for any other in the First Book -- a good indication as to the uneasiness of the authors with the whole idea of episcopal oversight, given their recent experience with absentee bishops.

Elders in the First Book are to be elected annually, and are to have responsibility for disciplinary oversight in churches.[317] They are to be chosen from among "Men of best knowledge in Gods word and cleanest life, men faithfull and of most honest conversation that can be found in the kirk..."[318] As with ministers, there is no hint that ordination is needed for those fulfilling the office. Among the duties of elders are:

> ...to assist the ministers in all publike affairs of the kirk, to wit, in determining and judging causes, in giving admonition to the licentious liver, in having respect to the manners and conversation of al men within their charge (pp. 175-176).

Donaldson says of the elders of this period that "there was no possibility of mistaking such annually elected elders for an order in the ministry, for they were manifestly lay officers and represent an element of lay control, an element of anti-clericalism."[319] Yet this is a very slippery point, for it is hard to draw the boundaries between "clergy" and "laity" for any

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[316]Pp. 122-123.

[317]Pp. 174ff.

[318]P. 174.

[319]The Scottish Reformation, p. 84.

office in the First Book, as concerned as the authors are with function above all else.

Deacons in the First Book are stewards of the material resources of the church, whose function is:

> ...to receive the rents etc, gather the almes of the kirk, to keep and distribute the same, as by the ministers and kirk shall be appointed. They may also assist in judgement with the Ministers and Elders and may be admitted to read in assembly...[320]

Like elders, deacons serve for one-year terms, and are not to be paid.[321]

The Second Book of Discipline addresses the offices of ministry in a much more systematic fashion. Rather than proceeding from the particular functions connected with the notes of word, sacrament and discipline, the Second Book begins with the nature of the kirk. The difference is significant: for while the First Book springs directly and almost spontaneously out of the word and the need for its proclamation, the Second Book begins with the reality of the kirk's institutional existence and the necessity of providing order for the organization. With that difference noted, it is important to point out that the two are not all that different in their underlying theology. Like the First Book, the Second Book envisions itself as firmly grounded in scripture.[322]

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[320]Pp. 178-179.

[321]P. 179.

[322]"Thairfor this power and policie of the kirk should lene upon the word of God immediatlie as the onlie ground thairof, ane sould be tane from the puir fountanis of the Scripturis, heiring the voce of Chryst, the onlie spirituall king, and being rewlit be his lawis." -- Kirk, Second Book, p. 167.

The church order of the Second Book builds on the order of the earlier one, with a few exceptions. The significant differences for our purposes are that the offices of reader and exhorter have disappeared, and the office of superintendent has likewise ceased to exist as a distinct office -- although the function of individual visits to particular churches at the behest of a presbytery remains.[323]

The Second Book sees church order as growing out of three functions:

> ...the haill policie of the kirk consistit in thrie cheif thingis: in doctrene, in discipline and distributioun. With doctrene is joint administratioun of the sacramentis.[324]

In terms of the notes of the kirk described in the Scots Confession (which implicitly form the order for the First Book of Discipline), word and sacrament are together comprised in "doctrene," and discipline remains -- although the distribution of alms and stewardship of church finances are broken off from discipline to form a separate category, "distributioun."

Out of these three divisions arise the three offices of the church that are present in the Second Book of Discipline: "ministeris or preacheris,...eldaris or governouris [and] deaconis or distributeris."[325]

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[323]Kirk, Second Book, p. 197.

[324]p. 173.

[325]Kirk, The Second Book of Discipline, p. 174. Kirk goes on to compare these three divisions to the First Book of Discipline's three chapters on doctrine, patrimony and discipline, and to Beza's confession of faith, which divides the ministries of the church

It ought to be noted that this threefold order of ministry is not the same as the threefold order in Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism of bishop, presbyter and deacon. In the presbyterian understanding, the functions of the bishop are divided among the minister (who bears the ancient episcopal responsibility for word and sacrament in a particular location) and the governing bodies of the church as they go about their disciplinary oversight. There is an individual episcopate of word and sacrament and a corporate episcopate of governance. The ancient presbyter corresponds to the elder in the presbyterian system, although the presbyterian elder may not ordinarily proclaim the word or celebrate the sacraments.[326] The deacon is quite similar in both systems, although the presbyterian deacon has few, if any, liturgical duties.

The identity of minister and bishop is explicit in the Second Book. The book lists four "...ordinarie functionis or offices in the kirk of God: the office of the pasture, minister or bischop; the office of the docter; the presbiter or eldar; and the deacone."[327] Lest it seem confusing that four offices are listed

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into three sub-sections: "la prédication de la Parole," "la dispensation des biens de l'Église" and "la discipline ecclésiastique." See also Calvin, Institutes IV.4.1.

[326]In the Anglican and Roman Catholic understanding this is technically true as well -- insofar as presbyters in their essential nature are concerned -- for presbyters (or priests) perform sacramental functions only at the behest of the bishop, in whom those functions are naturally lodged.

[327]P. 176. It is interesting to note, also, the interchangeable use of the words "function" and "office."

instead of three, it must be noted that the book sees the office of doctor as a sub-category of the office of minister. Doctors are ministers who are on detachment, as it were, to a university -- although during the time of their service as doctors they are not permitted to preach or celebrate the sacraments unless they are simultaneously serving a local church.[328] Apparently, it was fairly common for particular individuals to move back and forth between the offices of minister and doctor, as called to do so.

In addition to the four contemporary church offices, the Second Book of Discipline lists three "extraordinary" offices, that "have now ceissit in the kirk of God except quhen he pleased extraordinarlie for ane tyme to steir up sum of thame agane": apostles, evangelists and prophets.[329] The initiative in the calling of people for these extraordinary offices (as rarely as that calling may happen) belongs entirely to God, outside the structures of the church.

Beyond the four ordinary and three extraordinary offices, the book says, there are to be no others:

> ...na ma offices aucht to be resavit or be sufferit in the trew kirk of God establischit according to his word....all the ambitious titles inventid in the kingdome of antichryst and in his usurpit hierarchie, quhilk ar not ane of thais four sortis, togiddir with the offices dependand thairupone, in ane word aucht to be rejectid.[330]

The "usurpit hierarchie" is the hierarchy of bishops,

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[328]P. 189.

[329]Pp. 175-176.

[330]P. 177.

archbishops, cardinals and pope. Kirk notes that this condemnation refers also to all manner of subsidiary titles (vicar, parson, provost, dean, etc.) that some presbyterian ministers may have inherited with their benefices.[331]

Finally, one of the chief characteristics of ministerial order in the Second Book of Discipline is the emphasis on egalitarianism. With a concept of office that is wholly functional, it is impossible to elevate one office above another for the purpose of administrative oversight. Oversight belongs to the corporate body alone:

> Throughout, importance was attached to functions rather than titles, and the power of oversight and visitation of more churches than one was adjudged to be no intrinsic part of a pastor's, or bishop's, office, since it properly resided not in an individual but in the church.[332]

The Calling and Admission of Ministers

The First Book of Discipline states that "vocation" has three parts: "election, examination and admission."[333] The Second Book makes a comparable statement, that "ordinary calling" (that is, calling to the ordinary, rather than the extraordinary, offices of the kirk) consists of "election and ordination."[334] In both cases, "election" refers to the process of selecting a candidate for office, and "admission" and "ordination" are comparable (although

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[331]Kirk, Second Book of Discipline, p. 177, n. 41.

[332]p. 82.

[333]Cameron, First Book, p. 96.

[334]Kirk, Second Book, p. 179.

it must be remembered that the First Book proscribes the rite of ordination, substituting a much simpler ceremony of admission to office).[335] In both cases, the entire process belongs to the whole church, rather than to a designated official or bishop.

What is not present in the First Book is an explanation of calling. The emphasis there is not on how a candidate may discern a call to ministry, but rather on how the congregation may elect the person they want to be their preacher, and subsequently have that person examined by "men of soundest judgement remaining in some principall town next adjacent unto them" -- in other words, by the body that, by the time of the Second Book, has come to be known as the eldership or presbytery.[336] The First Book, mentions only one component to a call: the call of the church. The Second Book, gives slightly more attention to the matter of discerning a call. While the First Book simply assumes that candidates will make themselves known (or may in some instances be identified by church leaders), the Second Book speaks of "...the calling of God and the inward testimony of guid conscience..." as well as "...the lauchfull approbatioun and outward judgement of men according to Goddis word and ordour establischid in his kirk."[337] These two aspects correspond to the "inner call" and "outer call" of Calvin.

Indeed, the whole process of election and calling of ministers

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[335]Pp. 101ff.

[336]Cameron, First Book, pp. 96ff.

[337]Kirk, Second Book, p. 178.

closely parallels Calvin's.[338] Although this somewhat cumbersome procedure was barely workable in the turbulent times of the Reformation, still the kirk held to it (although, interestingly, the First Book contains a provision for the superintendent appointing a candidate if the people of a congregation are unable to make up their mind within forty days).[339] The necessity of a rigorous examination is particularly emphasized, despite the shortage of good candidates:

> We are not ignorant that the raritie of godly and learned men shall seem to some a just reason why that so strait and sharpe examination should not be taken universally, for so it shall appeare that the most part of the Kirks shall have no minister at all. But let these men understand, that the lack of able men shall not excuse us before God, if by our consent unable men be placed over the flock of Christ Jesus....let them understand that it is alike to have no minister at all, and to have an Idoll in the place a true minister: Yea and in some cases it is worse, for those that be utterly destitute of ministers, will be diligent to search for them; but those that have a vain shadow, do commonly without care content themselves with the same, and so remain they continually deceived...[340]

The rigor of the examinations did not lessen in later years. In the Restoration era, for example, candidates were required to have completed several (usually four) years of postgraduate study in divinity.[341] Then followed the examination, following

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[338]J.H.S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland (Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 168.

[339]P. 96.

[340]First Book of Discipline, p. 104. In the days of the First Book, of course, readers could fill the gap. Many readers acquired proper training and eventually became ministers themselves.

[341]Foster, Bishop and Presbytery, p. 89.

guidelines such as the ones promulgated by the synod of Aberdeen in 1671. These stated that examinations were to extend over the course of no fewer than six meetings of presbytery, each examination session considering biblical languages, "questionaire tryall," exegesis, "dispute," the "Exercise and Additione" and a sermon. At these examinations, the presbytery was required to ascertain that the candidate "...be acquainted in common measure with the letter and received sense of Scripture, positive and polemicall Divinitie, and Church Historie, be so well at least acquainted with the originall Languages, as to expone any chapter in the Greek New Testament, and read any parcell of the Old Testament in Hebrew."[342] This examination was not for ordination, but for licensure, after which the candidate would have to undergo several probationary years before finally being presented with a benefice.

The whole area of the election and examination of ministers is under the oversight of the "eldership" or presbytery. It is the responsibility of that body to maintain rigorous standards, regardless of supply and demand. According to the First Book of Discipline, the congregation has little say over who is to be their minister; the decision lies almost entirely with the superintendent and the superintendent's council (although the congregation can apparently suggest candidates).[343] The situation has changed

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[342]Foster, Bishop and Presbytery, p. 94.

[343]First Book of Discipline, p. 98. Cameron's footnotes here are particularly important, for they help distinguish between the various senses of the word "church" -- as local congregation and as

somewhat by the time of the Second Book; there, placing any kind of officer into a congregation contrary to the will of the congregation, or without the voice of the elders, is forbidden.[344] But still, most of the initiative for determining that the candidate demonstrates "soundnes of religioun and godliness of lyf" lies with the presbytery.[345]

Election of ministers, then, is the task of the whole church as embodied in the presbytery, not of a single official or of the congregation. The process must include a rigorous examination to insure that the candidate is qualified. In addition, the Second Book of Discipline contains a heightened emphasis on spiritual discernment of call on the part of the candidate, and accords more initiative to the congregation in acclaiming the choice of the presbytery than does the First Book.

Ordination by the Laying On of Hands

We have already seen how the First Book of Discipline speaks of "admission" of ministers rather than ordination, and how the rite of the laying of hands is not recommended, because "the miracle has ceased."[346] Yet more than simply discounting the laying on of hands as an empty ritual, the authors of the First

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a larger body.

[344]Kirk, Second Book, pp. 179-180.

[345]p. 179.

[346]First Book of Discipline, p. 102. This restraint with regard to the laying on of hands comes directly from Calvin (Institutes IV.3.16; IV.19.6).

Book actively distrust the rite as having Roman overtones, as this passage indicates:

> It is neither the clipping of their crownes, the greasing of their fingers, nor the blowing of the dumb dogges called the Bishops, neither the laying on of their handes that maketh Ministers of Christ Jesus. But the Spirit of God inwardly first moving the hearts to seeke Christs glorie, and the profite of his Kirk, and thereafter the nomination of the people, the examination of the learned, and publick admission (as before is said) make men lawfull ministers of the Word and Sacraments.[347]

It is unlikely that the First Book of Discipline was ever completely successful in suppressing the rite of the laying on of hands. James Kirk cites a number of instances of the rite being used in the intervening period between the two books, and also points out that the 1566 General Assembly did not object to the Second Helvetic Confession's advocacy of the practice.[348]

By the time of the Second Book, the rite has become institutionalized:

> Ordinatioun is the separatioun and sanctifeing of the persone appointit of God and his kirk eftir he be weill tryit and fund qualifeit. The ceremonyis of ordinatioun ar fasting and eirnest prayer, and impositioun of handis of the elderschippe.[349]

There has apparently been considerable variation over the years as to the personnel involved in the laying on of hands as a minister of the word is ordained. Some would insist that both the ministers and elders of the presbytery ought to lay on hands, and others would invite only the ministers. The Second Book of

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[347]P. 207.

[348]Second Book of Discipline, pp. 68ff.

[349]P. 180.

Discipline does not provide guidance on this question, although it may be possible to infer from the use of the word "elderschippe," in the above-cited passage, that elders were involved (presumably, the word would not have been used if the laying on of hands by only ministers had been intended).

The Duties of Ministers

Just as with other topics, the First Book of Discipline is far from comprehensive on the subject of the duties of ministers. Proclamation of the word and celebration of the sacraments can certainly be assumed, of course, but the book does not provide much further detail on the subject of what ministers of that day and age are actually expected to do. Ministers are required to maintain residence in the parish they serve.[350] They are also required to maintain a certain ethical lifestyle (as demonstrated by the list of moral offenses for which a minister may be deposed).[351] Furthermore, they are responsible for seeing that their immediate families behave in a similarly upright fashion.[352] They are responsible for the catechetical duty of instructing the people before celebrations of the Lord's Supper (four times per year or fewer).[353] They preside over weddings and funerals.[354] Ministers

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[350]Cameron, First Book, p. 103.

[351]Pp. 173, 177.

[352]P. 178.

[353]Pp. 183-184.

[354]Pp. 191ff., 199ff.

also preside over kirk-session disciplinary proceedings.[355]

The Second Book of Discipline is more explicit, noting a list of ministerial duties that include preaching, administering the sacraments, praying for the people, exercising disciplinary oversight in order to rebuke and exhort, executing the sentence of kirk-session disciplinary proceedings, solemnizing marriage and making all public announcements in the kirk concerning ecclesiastical affairs.[356] Ministry is seen as a lifetime vocation; ministers who leave their duties without permission of the presbytery face severe penalties, from admonition to excommunication.[357] Although eldership, too, is for life, elders are permitted to have times of rest when they are not actually serving, according to the Levitical rota of 1 Chronicles 24:1-19.[358]

As for the period following the Second Book, Walter Roland Foster provides a concise summary of ministerial duties in the late 1600s:

> Ministers were regularly expected to preach twice on Sunday, catechize weekly, celebrate the Lord's Supper once a year, visit the sick, make parish calls, administer discipline, and take care of the poor. Where there was a school, this was also supervised by the minister.[359]

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[355]P. 168.

[356]Kirk, Second Book, pp. 184ff.

[357]P. 184.

[358]P. 192.

[359]Bishop and Presbytery, p. 104.

The Problem of Bishops

As we have seen, neither the First Book of Discipline nor the Second Book provide any place in their system of governance for bishops. Yet historical realities caused the Reformed church in Scotland to recognize bishops in one area or another of its jurisdiction for over a century after the First Book of Discipline. The existence of bishops in the kirk has led some modern-day historians to question whether the early reformers were more than simply tolerant of bishops, but were positively in favor of such regional administrative officers.

This question is highly complex, and in the past the waters have been muddied by many who approached it with a bias in favor of one side or the other. Sometimes the bias has been for the best of motives -- a desire for ecumenical unity between Reformed churches and churches with an episcopal order. Yet care needs to be taken, in the study of so turbulent a period as post-reformation Scotland, that generalizations are not made too quickly on the basis of only one particular locality or time.

It is impossible to do more in this study than to simply note a few observations about the view of episcopacy reflected in the documents we have been studying; yet even this will demonstrate that those who would plumb the depths of the Reformation in search of episcopacy ought to be wary of mistaking their own reflection for the depths.

As we have seen, the First Book of Discipline does contain provision for superintendents -- regional officials with particular

responsibility for church visitations and the placement of scarce ministers in churches. Yet these superintendents are a far cry from bishops. The First Book makes it clear that superintendents are to itinerate, to actively preach, and to seek to insure that all congregations in their "diocese" are provided with ministers, or at least readers.[360] It is clear from the provisions for election and dismissal of superintendents that they serve on the basis of "publick consent."[361] It is far from clear that superintendents are intended to be a permanent office, particularly considering the disclaimer in the First Book that the office has been created because the framers of the discipline consider it "a thing most expedient at this time."[362] Presbyterian connectional government requires strong congregations; since the congregations of Knox's time were anything but strong (with the exception of churches in the larger towns), superintendents were indeed an expedient way to see that outlying churches quickly obtained the quality of leadership they needed to commence the rebuilding process. The word "superintendent" itself is evidence that the reformers intended no episcopal overtones for the office; if they had wanted bishops, they could easily have used that term to identify these officeholders.

Much has been made, also, of the fact that three

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[360]P. 122ff. This passage is quoted at length in the section on church offices, above.

[361]P. 125.

[362]P. 115.

pre-Reformation bishops -- the bishops of Galloway, Orkney and Caithness -- were allowed to continue in the new church for a time. The men in these particular offices sympathized with the Reformation. This, too, can be seen as a matter of expediency -- in a time of armed conflict, the reformers had too much to worry about to risk offending their leading allies.

James Kirk has described as well as anyone how the search for intentional episcopacy in the early days of the Reformation is certainly a vain one:

> A search for the approval of diocesan episcopacy (or for its outright condemnation) in the writings of the Scottish reformers has proved unrewarding, and is somewhat inapposite since a formal episcopacy...formed no part of the Scottish church's polity of the 1560's. The Scottish solution to the problem of supervision had been ingenious, for it neither adopted bishops on the English model, whose further reformation some still craved, nor rejected without trial the merits of individual oversight. The decision "to make difference betwixt Preachers at this time" on the purely practical grounds of a scarcity of ministers and the need to extend evangelisation throughout the country had led reformers to entrust supervision to superintendents and to ministers commissioned by the assembly (in which latter category were placed the three conforming bishops who had undertaken service in the reformed church); and such a convenient compromise might have persisted had the experiment not been eclipsed by the Leith settlement and by the introduction of bishops <u>per se</u> to whose ranks none of the superintendents or commissioners was then promoted.[363]

The General Assembly declared quite early (1565) that "every true preacher of Jesus Christ is a Christian bishop."[364] This

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[363]James Kirk, commentary on <u>The Second Book of Discipline</u>, p. 77.

[364]Quoted by James Kirk in his commentary on <u>The Second Book of Discipline</u>, p. 75.

principle is quite consistent with both books of discipline; we have already seen how the Second Book makes the same identification.[365] By the time of that book, the office of superintendent had fallen into disuse. There were still to be ministers charged with the task of visiting churches for purposes of oversight, but the authors take great pains to point out that such visitors are merely agencies of the eldership:

> Visitatioun of ma kirkis is na ordinar office ecclesiasticall in the persone of ane man, nather may the name of ane bischop be attributit to the visitour onlie, nather is it necessar to abyd alwyse in ane manis persone, bot it is the part of the eldarschip to send out qualifeit personis to visit pro re nata.[366]

The reason the reformers did not consider the historic solution of episcopacy is that such an office contradicted their fundamental ideals. We have seen how stewardship for all three notes of the church is never vested in one person, but always in an assembly; and we have also seen how there is parity of ministries, with no office held to be of higher status than another. For the authors of the First Book of Discipline, the disarray that characterized most outlying churches forced the "expedient" inclusion of superintendents in the discipline; but they are extremely careful to limit the powers of this office, and to call it by a name other than "bishop." For Melville and the authors of the Second Book, the familiar understanding of bishops from Calvin's Institutes is brought to bear: namely, that the office of

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[365]P. 183.

[366]P. 197.

bishop in the early church is not monarchical, but rather an overseer and pastor of the flock.[367] Consequently, it can be said that there is a place for bishops in the Reformed church: bishops and ministers are one and the same with regard to pastoral oversight of the flock, but the episcopal function is embodied corporately in church assemblies when governance is the issue.

CONCLUSION

One of the most enduring contributions of the Scottish Reformation is its distinctive view of ordination to ministry of the word. Ministry does not exist as an essential mark of the church; rather, it is essential to the church's mission. The reformers' concept of the church is dynamic: the church is called together by the word, exists for the sake of the word and is sent out to proclaim the word. Any ministry that contributes to the church's impulse to mission is salutary; yet any ministry that restricts the church to a static institutional existence, or which exists merely to enrich itself, is to be resisted.

So urgent did Knox and his colleagues consider the church's mission in their day that many points of church order were decided on an interim basis through an appeal to "expediency." In the period 1560-1690, we see a church at the foundry, in a molten state. Although it is risky to build too complex a theology of ordination on that still-malleable foundation, it can be observed

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[367]Commentary on The Second Book of Discipline, p. 55. See also Calvin, Institutes, IV.4.2-4; IV.6.1.

that apostolicity is vested in proper preaching, ordination is to function rather than office, there is parity of ministries, and the essential nature (or marks) of the church are held in stewardship by the whole body and delegated to particularly gifted individuals for use in their specific charges. Of the office of minister of the word, we can say that the requirements of preaching the word and celebrating the sacraments form the qualifications for the office. Because of the centrality of those tasks to the church's life, the qualifications can hardly be too rigorous. God's word itself will call up individuals with the capacities and energies for service. Ordination is not sacramental, but is rather a recognition of spiritual gifts already granted, accompanied by a prayer that such gifts may continue.

CHAPTER 5: THE DEVELOPING AMERICAN UNDERSTANDING OF ORDINATION

The Colonial Period

Presbyterianism came to the New World with some of the earliest colonists. Although the first Reformed congregation established in the New World was Dutch, Scots and Scots-Irish were also among the earliest immigrants to North America. They brought their religious convictions with them.

From the beginning, Presbyterians in the New World did not see themselves as having a direct institutional connection to Reformed churches in Europe.[368] No American presbytery was established under the oversight of the Church of Scotland, nor any other European church. As congregations were established, they operated as more-or-less independent entities, bound together only by a common ethos. There was some variation in polity and praxis from one locality to another.[369]

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[368]Leonard Trinterud, in The Forming of an American Tradition (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1949), pp. 21ff., relates how the scattered congregations of Presbyterian heritage in New England and Long Island maintained rule by elders and ordained ministers in the Presbyterian manner, even though they were not under the direct oversight of a European church. See also the earlier study by Charles A. Briggs, American Presbyterianism, Its Origin and Early History (New York: Scribner, 1885).

[369]David D. Hall, The Faithful Shepherd: A History of the New England Ministry in the Seventeenth Century (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), is a helpful study of the establishment of the ministry among Congregationalists in colonial New England. Although there was a certain amount of intermingling among Congregationalists and Presbyterians in the

The ministers of these early Presbyterian churches had all been educated in Europe. Although they may initially have journeyed to the New World under the sponsorship of various English or Scottish presbyteries or missionary societies, the time and rigors of the Atlantic crossing made continued interaction all but impossible. As American candidates for ministry were raised up, their churches typically dispatched them back to Europe for their theological education.[370]

In many of the English-speaking churches, the distinction between presbyterianism and congregationalism was none too clear. Many churches were comprised of European immigrants from both backgrounds, and their elected leaders were agreeable to calling ministers from either tradition. Since there was a serious shortage of educated ministers during this period, American churches typically counted themselves grateful to have any ordained

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colonial period, it is beyond the scope of this study to comment in depth on English Puritan ideas of ministry and their influence on the colonial Congregationalists. Our focus will be on the primary influence on American presbyterianism, Scottish presbyterianism.

[370]The first American universities were founded for the purpose of training ministers. Harvard was founded in 1636, William and Mary in 1693, Yale in 1701 and the College of New Jersey (Princeton) in 1746. Robert N. Watkin, in The Forming of the Southern Presbyterian Minister: From Calvin to the American Civil War (Dissertation submitted to the Graduate School of Vanderbilt University, 1969), p. 188, calculates that by 1735, the Presbyterian Church had received seventy-eight ministers, twenty-three of whom had been graduated from Glasgow, nine from Edinburgh, five from Harvard and seventeen from Yale. Of the others, four were graduates of William Tennent's Log College, the antecedent of Princeton. It was also possible for candidates to prepare for the ministry under the private tutelage of a learned minister. By the end of the colonial period, the vast majority of American Presbyterian ministers were being trained at American theological institutions.

minister at all.

The first presbytery in the New World was not established until 1706, when the Presbytery of Philadelphia was constituted by seven ministers, including the Scots-Irish evangelist Francis Makemie.[371] By 1716, when the first synod (the Synod of New York and Philadelphia) was formed, there were seventeen ministers in Philadelphia Presbytery.[372] By 1789, when the first General Assembly was formed, there were 177.[373] Yet despite the rapid growth in numbers of ordained ministers, by 1788 only half the Presbyterian churches in the colonies had pastors.[374]

Indisputably the most important figure in the earliest days of

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[371]The growth of the Presbyterian church in the new world proceeded very differently than it did in Scotland and on the Continent, where it had been based on a reform of existing church structures. The unsettled American continent provided a very different setting for the construction of a church "from the ground up." Early missionaries such as Makemie established congregations, whose sessions in time affiliated themselves with others in presbyteries; presbyteries eventually joined together to form synods. None of these governing bodies were organically related to the Church of Scotland or to any other European church. In time, the separation of the thirteen American colonies from the Crown necessitated the establishment of a General Assembly.

[372]Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Records of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America: Embracing the Minutes of the Presbytery of Philadelphia, From A.D. 1706 to 1716; Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia, From A.D. 1717 to 1758; Minutes of the Synod of New York, from A.D. 1745 to 1758; and Minutes of the Synod of Philadelphia and New York, From A.D. 1758 to 1788 (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1841), pp. 7-8.

[373]Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Minutes of the General Assembly, From Its Organization A.D. 1789 to A.D. 1820 Inclusive (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1847), p. 21.

[374]Watkin, Robert Nuckols, Jr., The Forming of the Southern Presbyterian Minister, p. 174.

American Presbyterianism was the missionary Francis Makemie, a member of the Presbytery of Laggan, Ireland. Makemie travelled up and down the Atlantic coast, founding churches throughout the middle colonies. His view of the validity of Presbyterian ordination derived directly from scripture, in the de jure divino tradition of Melville. Makemie wrote, in a 1694 pamphlet responding to the Quaker (and former Presbyterian) George Keith, that his calling as a minister came not from the pope, but from "Jesus Christ and [was] warranted from the Scripture."[375]

The most divisive issue among Presbyterians in this period was the proper role of the Westminster Confession in the examination both of candidates for ordination, and of already-ordained ministers seeking admission to a presbytery. The controversy centered around "the Adopting Act" of 1729, by which the Synod of Philadelphia required ministers to "declare their agreement in, and approbation of" the Westminster Confession of Faith, as being "in all the essential and necessary articles, good forms of sound words and systems of Christian doctrine."[376]

The Adopting Act was an artful compromise, reconciling those who held that ministers ought strictly to "subscribe" to every

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[375]An Answer to George Keith's Libel (Boston, 1694), p. 17, quoted by Elwyn Smith, The Presbyterian Ministry in American Culture, A Study in Changing Concepts, 1700-1900 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 24. For more on Makemie, see John Montieth Barkley, Francis Makemie of Ramelton: Father of American Presbyterianism (Belfast: Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland, 1981).

[376]Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Records of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1841), 1729, pp. 92ff.

tenet of the Westminster Confession, and those who, in conscience, felt that they needed to exclude certain sections (with the presbytery's approval) as not "essential or necessary."

In order to meet the need for qualified ministers, the Presbyterian minister William Tennent founded the "Log College" in 1735 in Neshaminy, Pennsylvania. This early academy was the antecedent of the College of New Jersey (later to become Princeton University, and also Princeton Theological Seminary). Although the Log College's history was brief, it was the first attempt on American soil to provide theological training for Presbyterian ministers -- and its graduates were remarkably influential, going on to assume significant leadership roles among Presbyterians in North America.[377]

The "Log College" had been founded, in part, to provide a theological education alternative for those who considered the already-established colleges too staid. A spirit of revival was abroad in the land, inspired by the impassioned preaching of ministers such as Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield. One of the graduates of the Log College, Gilbert Tennent (the son of William), went on to become the chief proponent of the new revivalism.

Gilbert Tennent's best-known exposition of his views was also his most controversial. In a published sermon, The Danger Of an

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[377]For more on William Tennent and the Log College, see James W. Fraser, Schooling the Preachers: The Development of Protestant Theological Education in the United States, 1740-1875 (University Press of America, 1988), pp. 6ff.

Unconverted Ministry, he attacks those who emphasize the "outer call" to ministry, mediated by the church, to the exclusion of the "inner call" of spiritual regeneration.[378] Tennent divides the ministers of his day into two camps: the "natural men," who have not received any evident gift of God's grace, and the "gracious men," who have had an inner experience of spiritual revitalization and are eager to tell about it. The natural men, he says, "have no call of God to the ministerial work under the gospel dispensations....[they are] very proud and conceity...and ignorant of the new birth....their discourses are cold and sapless and, as it were, freeze between their lips." The traditionalist-dominated Synod of 1738, responding to the practice of Tennent's Presbytery of New Brunswick of examining candidates for ministry to determine whether they were "gracious," transferred the responsibility for examinations to the Synod.[379]

This dispute bitterly divided the fledgling Presbyterian Church into two camps, the Old Side and the New Side -- which separated into two different denominations during the years 1741-1758. The Old Side was the traditionalist party, and the New Side the party of the revivalists. The same division would appear

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[378]The Danger of An Unconverted Ministry: Consider'd in a Sermon on Mark VI.3: Preached At Nottingham, in Pennsylvania, March 8, Anno 1739 (Philadelphia: Printed by Benjamin Franklin, 1740). A most thorough study on Tennent's theology is Milton J. Coalter, Gilbert Tennent, Son of Thunder: A Case Study of Continental Pietism's Impact On the First Great Awakening in the Middle Colonies (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986).

[379]Elwyn Smith, The Presbyterian Ministry in American Culture, A Study in Changing Concepts, 1700-1900 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), p. 41.

again, over parallel but slightly different issues, in the Old School/New School schism of 1837-1869.

Much of the rapid growth of American presbyterianism during the eighteenth century was fueled by Scots and Scots-Irish immigrants. In the early part of that century, the strongest influence was the English Puritan presbyterianism of Westminster (indeed, this was the viewpoint of Francis Makemie). Yet by the end of the century, the Scottish variation had come to exercise increasing dominance.[380]

Even so, the life of the church and of its ministry in the colonial era was very different from that of later periods. As Elwyn Smith puts it,

> The colonial pastor was the pre-eminent figure of his community. The ecclesiastical order of the parish bore on the life of the whole town and determined acceptable forms of public behavior. As the Pennsylvania frontier in the colonial period shows, church government virtually corresponded with civil government before the organization of public order. The minister was not only the public's moral administrator but its educator....In a way which can now only be recaptured by a strenuous effort of imagination, the minister was God's man. Church order symbolized the order of God's Kingdom; church censures bespoke divine judgment. This pattern of ministry and image of the minister presumed much but it also offered much, and when the world that was built around it passed away Calvinists scarcely knew how to rebuild the church and ministry or fix the role of the minister afresh.[381]

It was not until the church was on the verge of establishing

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[380]This is the finding of Jon Butler in Power, Authority and the Origins of American Denominational Order: The English Churches in the Delaware Valley, 1680-1730 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1978), pp. 5-81.

[381]Smith, pp. 95-96.

a General Assembly that American Presbyterians began to systematize their understanding of ministerial order. In 1786, the Synod of New York and Philadelphia approved A Draught of a Plan of Government and Discipline for the Presbyterian Church in North America, which asserts:

> The ordinary and perpetual officers in the church are bishops or pastors; the representatives of the people, usually stiled ruling elders and deacons.[382]

Like many Reformed documents of that period, the Draught of a Plan of Government and Discipline demonstrates a strong tendency toward de jure divino presbyterianism -- the assumption that presbyterian church order is essentially that of the New Testament church, rediscovered by the Reformers and transplanted to the fertile ecclesiastical soil of sixteenth-century Europe. We have already seen how modern New Testament scholarship frustrates any such attempt to read Reformation-era ministerial order back into the life of the early church.

The following passage is an example of the de jure divino approach in this early document:

> ...as the office and character of the gospel minister is more particularly and fully described in the Holy Scriptures under the title of bishop than any other; and as this term is peculiarly expressive of his duty, as an overseer of the flock, it is highly proper that it should be retained.[383]

The authors of the Draught of a Plan of Government and

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[382]A Draught of a Plan of Government and Discipline for the Presbyterian Church in North America, Proposed By a Committee Appointed For that Purpose (Philadelphia: Francis Bailey, 1786), p. 2.

[383]A Draught of a Plan of Government and Discipline, p. 2.

Discipline did not see themselves as recovering any early ministerial order other than that of the New Testament. Although they use titles like "bishop" and "presbyter," their understanding of these offices is based on Calvin's interpretation, not Irenaeus' -- and Calvin assumed that his ministerial order was essentially that of the apostolic church. Where biblical evidence for church order cannot be found, the preference of the authors of the Draught is for a purely functional approach.

Although the Draught of a Plan of Government and Discipline readily uses titles such as "presbyter" and "bishop," it is well to be wary of extracting from it traces of the threefold order of bishop, presbyter and deacon, as it is understood today. Although the threefold pattern had become the standard in the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Reformation, the Reformers did not consider it authoritative in and of itself. As much as Calvin and the others respected the patristic writers, they were consciously appealing to what they considered a higher authority -- scripture -- and therefore saw their task as re-creating the authentic New Testament church. This same Reformed understanding crossed the Atlantic with the earliest Presbyterian colonists.

The Draught was eventually adopted, with minor changes, by the General Assembly, as the basis for the denomination's first Constitution. Interestingly, a chapter on ordination was dropped from the final draft of the original version of the "Directory for the Public Worship of God" that is part of the Constitution; this began the precedent that has continued in the Presbyterian Church

(U.S.A.) Constitution to this day, of dealing with ordination under the "Form of Government" rather than the "Directory for Worship."[384]

From the American Revolution to the Civil War

One of the leading intellectual figures in the Presbyterian Church of the early nineteenth century was Samuel Miller, professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. Miller carried on a voluminous correspondence on a variety of subjects, and also published a variety of pamphlets and addresses, many of which were devoted to defending de jure divino presbyterianism. With the heady confidence of a true believer, Miller asserts that presbyterianism is the only true scriptural order for church government:

> It is the sincere belief of the writer of these pages, that the Presbyterian Church, as it now exists in these United States, entirely unconnected with the civil government, and taking the word of God as its "only infallible rule of faith and practice," is more truly primitive and apostolical in its whole constitution, of doctrine, worship, and order, than any other church, now on earth.[385]

Miller sees presbyterian ministerial order as explicitly present not only in the New Testament, but also in the Old. In An Essay on the Warrant, Nature and Duties of the Office of the Ruling

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[384]The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Constitution (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 1993) consists of three parts: the "Form of Government," the "Directory for Worship" and the "Rules of Discipline."

[385]Samuel Miller, Presbyterianism, The Truly Primitive and Apostolical Order of the Church of Christ (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1835), pp. 7-8. Miller goes on to add smugly, "An humble attempt to evince the truth of this position, will occupy the following pages."

Elder in the Presbyterian Church, Miller endeavors to show that the office of presbyterian elder "is mentioned in the New Testament, as existing in the apostolic Church; that it was adopted from the Synagogue; and that it occupied, in substance, the same place in the days of the Apostles, that it now occupies in our truly primitive and scriptural church."[386] Miller is of the opinion that there were "Bishops, Elders, and Deacons in the Synagogue," and that, in the New Testament church, there were "Bishops, Elders, and Deacons everywhere appointed."[387]

Directing his attention to the patristic writings, Miller sees presbyterianism there as well. Even in the letters of Ignatius (which most contemporary scholars regard as the first appearance of the threefold order of bishop, presbyter and deacon), Miller claims to have discovered presbyterian ministerial offices (although admittedly bearing different names):

> The plan of ecclesiastical government disclosed by the Epistles of Ignatius, as actually existing in his day, is manifestly Presbyterian. He represents every particular church of which he speaks, as furnished with a Bishop or Pastor, [and] a bench of Elders and Deacons...[388]

Even more extraordinary, Miller -- in the course of a bitter written polemic against the Episcopalians -- claims that Presbyterians are not only true apostolic Christians, but true

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[386](New York: Jonathan Leavett, and Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1831), p. 49.

[387]P. 51. To Miller, the word "bishop" is merely another word for "minister."

[388]Presbyterianism, The Truly Primitive and Apostolical Constitution of the Church of Christ, p. 13.

Episcopalians as well:

> ...Presbyterians are, in reality, Episcopalians, as well as their neighbors who popularly bear that name. Believing, as they do, that the Greek word which we translate bishop, simply means "overseer" of a flock, they, of course, hold to a parochial episcopacy, in opposition to diocesan episcopacy; or, in other words, that every minister of the gospel, who has a pastoral charge, is a scriptural bishop.[389]

James Frederick Holper, in Presbyteral Office and Ordination in American Presbyterianism, identifies a dichotomy that is present throughout the history of American presbyterian discussions of ministerial order, between "Calvinist/Westminster Presbyterianism" on the one hand, and "Melvillian Presbyterianism" on the other.[390] The Calvinist/Westminster stream relies more on the writings of Calvin, as filtered through the perspectives of the English Puritans of the Westminster Assembly. The Melvillian stream relies more on the Scottish presbyterianism of the Second Book of Discipline. Calvinist/Westminster presbyterianism stresses the pastoral, liturgical role of edification, carried out individually by ministers in the local church context. Melvillian presbyterianism sees the jurisdictional function, carried out collegially on the presbytery level, as normative.

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[389]The Primitive and Apostolical Order of the Church of Christ Vindicated (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1840), p. 31. Miller goes on to say that he prefers to use the title "prelatists" to describe those commonly known as episcopalians, reserving the word "episcopalian" for presbyterians, who in his view are the true bearers of that title.

[390]James Frederick Holper, Presbyteral Office and Ordination in American Presbyterianism: A Liturgical-Historical Study (a dissertation submitted to the graduate school of the University of Notre Dame, 1988), pp. 179ff.

Holper maintains that, in the first Constitution of American presbyterianism of 1788 (which was based in large part on the earlier Draught of a Plan of Government and Discipline), the minister is seen as the normative presbyter. This is true despite the etymological connection between the Greek presbuteros and the English "elder." American presbyterianism was intentionally defining itself not in terms of presbyters, but presbyteries -- not individual offices, but collegial assemblies.

The impact of this view is that the office of elder in early American presbyterianism becomes less important, on a practical level, than the office of minister. "Parity of offices" may have some relevance at the presbytery level when it comes to deciding who may vote, but on the local level there is little concept of parity: the ministry of word and sacrament is the distinctive office. In this early Constitution, there is nothing elders do that pastors cannot also do; elders are not counted in the quorum requirements of presbyteries; elders ordain no one -- not even other elders (who are ordained only by a minister).[391]

The Calvinist-Westminster model tended to predominate in early American presbyterianism, at least at the time the first Constitution was being written.[392] It remained the dominant school of thought until the time of the Civil War, when the schism between Northern and Southern Presbyterians afforded southerners the opportunity to bring the Melvillian model to the forefront. In the

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[391]Holper, pp. 187-188.

[392]Holper, pp. 189-190.

North, the Calvinist-Westminster model continued to predominate, until the time of the reunion of 1983.[393]

Here is how Holper sums up his argument:

> In short, the model of church office received by American Presbyterianism from its forbears in the Reformed Tradition may fairly be said to include two models of presbyteral ministry that are difficult to reconcile with one another. In the first model, institutionalized at the level of the local church, presbyteral office is normed with reference to the ministry of the pastor who is, in effect, a bishop-in-presbytery, a presbyter who is primus inter pares....In the second model, institutionalized at the level of the translocal church, where the only function of ongoing importance is the one that ruling elders and ministers share at the level of the local church -- i.e., making joint decisions about how to apply norms to specific situations -- presbyteral office takes its character from the task of ruling jointly. At this level, all are pares, none is primus -- because all share the same rights and responsibilities.[394]

Holper's analysis of the two ecclesiological streams that contribute to American presbyterian ministerial order is insightful. Both viewpoints continue to be influential today, and in fact exert a certain tension upon each other. Because one viewpoint (Calvinist-Westminster) is based on the kerygmatic and sacramental role of the minister in the local church, and the other (Melvillian) on the jurisdictional role of the minister in the presbytery, continued coexistence is possible; yet the tension

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[393]There have always been larger concentrations of Presbyterians of Scots and Scots-Irish heritage in the South than there have been in the North, where Continental Reformed elements have tended to play a larger role. When the Civil War isolated the more Melvillian, Scottish-inclined Southerners from the more Calvinist, Continentally-inclined Northerners, the Melvillian view naturally tended to predominate.

[394]Holper, pp. 192-193.

between the two makes for a rather indistinct theology of ordination, one which has made it difficult for Presbyterians to participate effectively in ecumenical discussions.[395]

American presbyterianism's emphasis on maintaining a duly called, appropriately educated minister in every pulpit -- to such an extent that the minister becomes part of the esse, not merely the bene esse of the church -- had disastrous consequences for the expansion of the Presbyterian church. On the frontier, properly trained ministers were hard to come by, as the renowned Southern Presbyterian historian Ernest Trice Thompson describes:

> [The settlers] moved into the wilderness without ministers, but they had their Bibles, their catechisms, and their Confession of Faith. No sooner were settlements effected than their appeals were sent up to the presbyteries, perhaps hundreds of miles away, for the ministry of the Gospel. A good part of the presbyteries' time was given to the consideration of these appeals. The communities were widely scattered; the roads, often nothing more than Indian trails, were difficult; the distances seemed enormous; and the number of ministers

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[395]The Presbyterian endorsement of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, for example, identifies the minister with the office of "bishop" in the threefold order of ministry; this grows out of the Calvinist/Westminster understanding of the minister in the local church as the "parson" (literally, "person") responsible for proclamation of the word and celebration of the sacraments. Yet if the scene is changed to a higher governing body (the presbytery), the Melvillian understanding predominates; the minister is now a "presbyter" rather than a bishop (the presbytery as a whole is a corporate bishop). The continuing tension between these two viewpoints makes for great confusion when the Presbyterian endorsement of the threefold pattern is held up against that of the Episcopal or Roman Catholic churches -- those with an episcopal polity understand the meaning of each of the three offices to be the same on any level of church government, while the Presbyterians effectively understand the meaning to change when one makes the move from the local church to a higher governing body.

available was utterly inadequate for the task.[396]

Anabaptist churches -- for whom the gathered congregation is the esse of the church -- had no difficulty in coping with the absence of ministers; and the Methodist circuit-rider system -- bringing somewhat less-thoroughly trained ministers to churches on an occasional basis -- was admirably well-suited to the rigors of frontier life. These denominations wooed and won many congregations of Scots and Scots-Irish immigrants that might otherwise have remained Presbyterian.

When the Presbyterians found themselves unable to deliver a sufficient number of trained ministers to the frontier churches, some congregations left the denomination to join the Campbellites, a schismatic group that would later become known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In the Kentucky territory, whole presbyteries seceded in 1810 in order to form the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, in a dispute over the validity of the ordinations of certain less-highly-educated candidates.[397]

These disagreements had more to do with local circumstances, however, than with any weighty disputes over the theology of ordination. The first distinctively theological clash between the Melvillians and those espousing the dominant Calvinist-Westminster

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[396]Ernest Trice Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, Vol. I: 1607-1861 (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1963), p. 48. Robert N. Watkin estimates, in The Forming of the Southern Presbyterian Minister, p. 261, that from 1810 to 1830 the numbers of Presbyterian ministers and Presbyterian churches trebled, but that the number of communicants increased sixfold.

[397]Thompson, Presbyterians in the South, Vol. I, pp. 144-155.

perspective took place in the early 1800s, in the region of the country then known as the Northwest frontier. A number of Presbyterian-Congregationalist federated churches had been established in this area, especially in New York and Ohio. Samuel Miller of Princeton Theological Seminary (an institution strong in the Scottish, Melvillian tradition), set out to completely reinterpret the office of elder, making it no longer subordinate to that of minister. In so doing, he also advanced a new conception of the office of minister.

Miller had first expressed this view in a sermon, while serving as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in New York City. In the published text of that sermon, Miller criticizes the practice (prevalent in certain frontier areas) of establishing federated Presbyterian-Congregationalist churches without elders.[398] Miller sees this practice as threatening the integrity of the office of ruling elder (the fact that he uses the term "ruling elder" is significant, for it reflects the Melvillian emphasis on jurisdiction as the essential reason for church office).

In a later work, An Essay on the Warrant, Nature and Duties of the Office of Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church, Miller (by this time on the Princeton faculty), further develops his

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[398]Samuel Miller, The Divine Appointment, the Duties and the Qualifications of Ruling Elders: A Sermon Preached in the First Presbyterian Church of New York, May 28, 1809 (New York: Samuel Whiting and Co., 1811), p. 41.

argument.[399] It is in this work that Miller uses not only the term "ruling elder" to refer to those serving on the session, but also "teaching elder" to refer to ministers -- a strong linguistic witness to the importance he places on parity.[400]

Miller's reliance on Melvillian de jure divino presbyterianism is clearly seen in this work, especially as he observes that the office of ruling elder is not merely an "ecclesiastical convenience," but a matter of "divine appointment."[401] Miller goes even further, declaring that elders as well as ministers can be described as "clergy":

> Mature inquiry and reflection have...finally persuaded [me] that the distinction between Clergy and Laity is...not to be made between these two classes of Elders.[402]

Consistent with his emphasis on parity between ministers and elders, Miller argues that the laying on of hands ought to be used not only at the ordination of ministers, but also at the ordination of elders (it was then the practice in American presbyterianism to

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[399](New York: Jonathan Leavett, and Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1831).

[400]An Essay on the Warrant, Nature and Duties of the Office of Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church, p. 192. To Miller, parity is not only a matter of who gets to vote in presbytery, but has to do with the very essence of church office.

[401]An Essay On the Warrant, Nature and Duties of the Office of Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church, pp. 195ff.

[402]An Essay on the Warrant, Nature and Duties of the Office of Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church, p. 202. Recognizing, however, the practical difficulty of convincing Presbyterians to describe elders as "clergy" in common discourse, Miller holds out for describing officeholders by the name of their office only ("ministers" or "teaching elders" on the one hand, and "ruling elders" on the other).

ordain ministers with both prayer and the laying on of hands, but elders only with prayer).[403]

In another work, The Primitive and Apostolical Order of the Church of Christ Vindicated, Miller takes on the Episcopalians. In it, he operates from a presupposition that presbyterian ministerial order is clearly set forth in scripture, and challenges his opponents to present more convincing evidence:

> We suppose...that there is, properly speaking, but one order of gospel ministers; that there are, indeed, two other classes of church officers, viz. ruling elders and deacons; but that neither of these are authorized to labour in the word and doctrine, or to administer either of the Christian sacraments. We suppose that there is a plain distinction made in Scripture between elders who only rule, and elders who, to the power of ruling, join also that of teaching and administering sealing ordinances.[404]

Miller goes on to assert, based on his reading of the scriptural record, that ministers are identical to biblical bishops:

> ...we maintain that there is but one order of ministers of the gospel in the Christian church; that every regular pastor of a congregation is a scriptural bishop; or, in other words, that every presbyter, who has been set apart, by the laying on of the hands the presbytery...is, to all intents and purposes, in the sense of Scripture, and of the primitive Church, a bishop; having a right, in company with others, his equals, to ordain, and to perform every service pertaining to the episcopal office.[405]

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[403]An Essay On the Warrant, Nature and Duties of the Office Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church, p. 278.

[404]The Primitive and Apostolical Order of the Church Vindicated (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1840), p. 26.

[405]Samuel Miller, The Primitive and Apostolical Order of the Church Vindicated, p. 27. It is significant, also, that Miller reserves the right of laying on hands in ordination to ministers

The struggle between Miller (of the "Old School" Princeton theology) and others of the "New School" Calvinist-Westminster theology came to a head at the 1831 General Assembly, when a group of commissioners successfully challenged the credentials of a commissioner from one of the federated congregations in Ohio, on the grounds that he was not an ordained Presbyterian elder (although, in good congregational fashion, he was a member of his local church's governing committee).[406]

Miller's campaign against the federated churches was not so much a struggle of polity as it was a struggle of theology -- the Old School assailing New School revivalism, but indirectly. In that effort, it paralleled the struggle that had resulted in the Cumberland Presbyterian schism of 1805 -- which, as we have already noted, was also centered on the issue of the validity of ministerial credentials. On the one side were the traditional, more academically inclined Presbyterians from the more settled states, the areas that had been most strongly influenced by the English presbyterianism of Westminster; on the other were arrayed the forces of the frontier -- more Scottish and Scots-Irish in their background, more influenced by the pragmatism of Melville than their Old School opponents.

No compromise to the ongoing dispute could be found. The 1837

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alone, in keeping with his understanding of ministers as bishops.

[406]The Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Office of the General Assembly, 1831), p. 338.

General Assembly, which included a clear majority of Old School forces, expelled the Synod of the Western Reserve (in Ohio) and the presbyteries of Utica, Geneva and Genesee (in New York) from the denomination, declaring that their structure was, in effect, too congregational, and therefore incompatible with Presbyterianism.[407] This was the beginning of the Old School/New School schism.

The 1842 Old School General Assembly, completing the work its predecessor had begun by expelling the New School presbyteries, ruled that individual sessions could decide whether or not elders and deacons ought to be ordained by the laying on of hands (not merely by prayer, as had formerly been the practice).[408]

The next phase in the controversy took the form of an ongoing debate, beginning in the 1840s, between Professor Charles Hodge of Princeton Theological Seminary and the Rev. Robert J. Breckinridge of Baltimore, over the nature of ministry. This time it was the Princeton professor who represented the Calvinist-Westminster (as over against the Melvillian) view.

The dispute arose over the seemingly minor question of who should be involved in the laying on of hands at the ordination of a minister. In 1842, the General Assembly unanimously ruled that elders were to be excluded from the laying on of hands at

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[407]Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1836, pp. 590, 595.

[408]Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1842, p. 217. Interestingly, that same assembly forbade the participation of elders in the ordination of ministers (or "bishops," in the language of the assembly) -- p. 217. Parity of elders and ministers had not yet advanced far enough to accomplish that sign of equal status.

ministers' ordinations. The following year, the Assembly ruled that a quorum of presbytery consisted of three ministers, deleting all mention of elders.

Breckinridge believed that these actions demonstrated an underlying theology of ordination that subordinated elders to ministers, and which in fact allowed ministers to rule without any elders present at all. To him, this represented a move toward "hierarchical government."[409]

Hodge was in favor of the Assembly's actions, while Breckinridge wanted to see a greater emphasis on parity. Breckinridge favored provisions that would make elders essential to a quorum for higher governing bodies, and that required the participation of elders in the laying on of hands at ministers' ordinations.

Breckinridge claimed he could discern such practices in the New Testament, while Hodge was a bit more reluctant to identify a clear blueprint for his own variety of presbyterianism in scripture:

> We maintain...that while there are certain general principles laid down on this subject in the Word of God, Christ has left his church at liberty, and given her authority to carry out those principles.[410]

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[409]"Ruling Elders," in Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 1843, XV, pp. 432ff.

[410]Charles Hodge, "Rights of Ruling Elders," in The Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 1843, p. 318. Breckinridge's arguments can be found in the pamphlet, Presbyterian Government not a hierarchy, but a commonwealth; and Presbyterian ordination, not a charm, but an act of government, the substance of two arguments (Supplement to The Spirit of the XIXth Century, 1843).

Hodge bases his arguments on the Westminster documents, Breckinridge on Melville's Second Book of Discipline. Hodge draws a distinction between permanent members of presbytery (ministers) and delegated temporary members (elders). He holds that the presbytery has three types of authority -- judicial, legislative and ministerial -- and that elders are limited to the first two types.[411] "Ministerial" authority Hodge sees as a sort of executive authority; and for that reason, only ministers can lay on hands at an ordination of a minister:

> After the decree has been passed that a man shall be ordained, it follows that it must not be done by those who are defective in power. It is clear that the moment you decide that ordination is a ministerial or executive act, that moment you decide that it must be performed by those possessing ministerial or executive authority....A ministerial or executive act therefore can be performed only by ministers....ruling elders are not in the "ministry" and therefore even this act does not belong to them.[412]

Hodge, in fact, holds an almost episcopal view of ordination authority, seeing it as vested in the personhood of those who have been ordained, and passed on by them to others through the laying on of hands.[413] This is seen in the following excerpt from one of his articles in the Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, a

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[411]Holper, pp. 262-263.

[412]Charles Hodge, "General Assembly: Ruling Elders," in Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review, 1843, p. 440.

[413]Episcopal churches generally understand apostolic succession to take place through the physical act of the laying on of hands. Reformed churches, on the other hand, have generally understood apostolic succession to be a matter of the transmission of true doctrine, rather than an unbroken string of ordinations extending back to the time of the apostles. Hodge's understanding clearly bears more similarities to the former view.

journal he founded and edited, which became the principal mouthpiece for his views on a variety of subjects:

> ...ordination is a ministerial act; it is performed by ministers as such, and not merely as members of presbytery. It is true all the ministers of the Presbyterian church have entered into a contract with each other not to exercise the right, except under certain circumstances, or on certain conditions...But this does not prove that the power to ordain comes from the constitution or that it belongs to ministers only when convened in what we call a presbytery. Any two or three ministers and...any one minister has as full right to ordain as Timothy or Titus had. Presbyterial ordination is ordination by a presbyter or presbyters; and not by a presbytery, in our technical sense of the term.[414]

Breckinridge, by contrast, sees ordination as little more than a ceremony of public approbation or installation. It is, he says:

> ...the mere public, formal, and official designation of a person to an office, and the assumption of it by him. It is, so to speak, only swearing in the officer.[415]

At the onset of the Civil War, the schism between the Old School and the New School was still in effect. Since the South had been a stronghold of Old School thinking, it is not surprising that Breckinridge's views predominated in the newly formed southern denomination, the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS).[416] Breckinridge's arguments were subsequently taken up by

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[414]Charles Hodge, "General Assembly: Ruling Elders," pp. 441-442.

[415]"The Right of the Ruling Elder in Ordination," Baltimore Literary and Religious Magazine, vol. VII, no. 4 (April, 1841), p. 171, cited by Watkin, p. 399. Breckinridge served as editor of this magazine, which Watkin calls "the chief anti-Catholic magazine of the South" (p. 440).

[416]The issue of slavery split the two Presbyterian churches (Old School and New School) across a fault line that ran perpendicular to their previous theological divisions. Although there were some

his protegé, James Henley Thornwell, who continued the challenge to Hodge.[417]

Holper summarizes the Hodge/Thornwell debate in this way:

> ...it would appear that [Hodge] considered the minister-presbyter as but one species of the genus minister -- albeit the most important one -- alongside two other species of ministers known as elders and deacons. For Thornwell, however, the ruler-presbyter was not the species, but the genus -- a genus which included two species known as teaching elders (i.e., ministers) and ruling elders...[Thornwell's] argument made all rulers -- and only the rulers -- clergy. In so doing, he managed not merely to subordinate the power of order to the power of jurisdiction -- a position in harmony with Reformed and Presbyterian theory and practice since Calvin -- but to submerge it. Nowhere is this more clear than in his insistence upon ordination as an act of governance (i.e., belonging to the power of jurisdiction), and not of ministers per se (i.e., an act arising from the power of order)."[418]

Northern Church Developments

In the North, the now-dominant New School expressed its fundamental agreement with Hodge over the issues that had inspired the Hodge-Thornwell debates:

> ...the act of induction is ministerial, not judicial. And as in respect to Baptism the elders, jointly with the pastor, determine who shall be admitted to this ordinance, yet the pastor only administers it, so in

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New School elements represented among those Southern (pro-slavery) Presbyterians who came together to form the PCUS, their numbers were small and their influence negligible.

[417]See Thornwell, James Henry, The Collected Writings of James Henry Thornwell, ed. John B. Adger, 4 vols. (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1881), especially "The Ruling Elder a Presbyter," vol. 4, pp. 115-131.

[418]Holper, pp. 288-290. Watkin had earlier used the language, "the preacher is but one species of the genus presbyter," to describe Thornwell's view -- p. 375.

> ordination -- the whole presbytery determine the fitness of the candidate, but only the ministers present induct into office.[419]

In the 1880s and 1890s, two PCUSA elders, J.G. Monfort and W.C. Gray, waged a debate over whether or not elders could moderate governing bodies. The debate focused on the appropriateness of elders engaging in two particular moderatorial functions: preaching and presiding at ordinations. Underlying this discussion, of course, was the larger issue of the meaning of "parity" between ministers and elders.

Monfort represents Hodge's Calvinist-Westminster viewpoint, and Gray represents Thornwell's Melvillian perspective. Gray goes beyond even Thornwell, however, in implying that if a presbytery were to call an elder to become pastor of a church, that elder could preach and exercise all sacramental functions, with no further ordination being necessary.[420] Monfort argues, on the other hand, that although ministers can be considered presbyters in matters of jurisdiction, they are bishops when it comes to pastoral and liturgical matters.[421]

The question over the suitability of elders serving as moderators begs the question of whether the pastoral-liturgical functions of the moderator are intrinsic to the position, or

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[419]Holper, pp. 365ff., n. 12, quoting the Minutes of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (New School), 1860, p. 242.

[420]Letter of Gray to Monfort, published December 22, 1886 in the Herald and Presbyter, reprinted in E.R. Monfort and W.C. Gray, Elder-Moderatorship: A Discussion of the Elder-Moderator Overtures (Cincinnati: Herald and Presbyter, 1887), pp. 26-27.

[421]Monfort and Gray, p. 8.

whether they are merely secondary responsibilities that can be delegated to a minister at those times when an elder is moderator. Monfort (following Hodge) opposes elders serving as moderators, seeing the pastoral-liturgical function as primary; Gray (following Breckinridge and Thornwell) favors elders as moderators, seeing the pastoral-liturgical function as exercised on behalf of the presbytery as a whole.[422]

Monfort's viewpoint triumphed for a time, but in 1918 the PCUSA General Assembly received the affirmative votes of a sufficient number of presbyteries to amend the Constitution, permitting elders to moderate governing bodies.[423]

Commenting on the 1906 Book of Common Worship ordination rite for ministers (which is advisory, not constitutional -- the constitutional provisions for ordination being found, as usual, in the Form of Government, not the Book of Common Worship), Holper demonstrates how dominant was the pastoral-liturgical understanding in the PCUSA:

> In short, this is a rite fit for a bishop, but not for a presbyter: the candidate is ordained by other bishops, promises subjection in the Lord to other bishops, is welcomed into the episcopal synod (the presbytery) by other bishops, and has his ministry interpreted almost solely in terms of such traditional episcopal functions as pastoral care, liturgical presidency, execution of discipline in the congregation, and ordination of new ministers.[424]

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[422]Holper, pp. 384-385.

[423]Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Minutes of the General Assembly, (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1918).

[424]Holper, p. 406.

In 1910 a judicial appeal was brought to the General Assembly, concerning a decision of the Presbytery of New York to license two men, Henry P. Van Dusen and Cedric A. Lehman, who had refused to affirm the doctrine of the virgin birth. After years of appeals and overtures, the case precipitated the Assembly in 1925 to appoint a "Committee of Fifteen" to present a report on the proper Presbyterian understanding of ordination and licensure. Unlike ordination to the eldership, that report states,

> [Ordination to the ministry] confers upon the candidate a new status. He is a layman no longer. He ceases to be a member of a particular church and becomes a member of a presbytery. He is amenable to the presbytery's discipline and no other charges can be brought against him in any other ecclesiastical tribunal.[425]

Hodge's viewpoint remained dominant in the PCUSA as late as 1927, as seen in the following pronouncement of the General Assembly:

> ...ordination confers a special status...[since] the Christian ministry derives not from the people but from the pastors...ministerial status is conferred through "the preaching presbyters" only.[426]

Following the Second World War, the PCUSA's understanding of ordination underwent what Holper describes as a "paradigm shift."[427] Increasingly, ministry came to be seen not so much as a specialized task carried out by ministers, assisted by elders and

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[425]Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Minutes of the General Assembly (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1927), p. 63.

[426]Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1927, pp. 62ff.

[427]Holper, p. 440.

deacons, but a task belonging to the whole church. The understanding of baptism as a sort of universal ordination gained ascendancy, particularly under the influence of Barthian theology.[428]

The most significant development of the early postwar period, however, was the merger negotiations that were initiated between the PCUSA, the PCUS and the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA).[429] Although only two of the merger partners would eventually decide to proceed with the 1958 merger (the PCUS presbyteries voted it down in 1954), the discussions leading up to the Plan for Union reveal much about the developing understanding of ordination in all three denominations.

The Plan for Union, like the PCUS Book of Church Order, deals with vocation and ordination in a general section, before going on to consider specific offices -- a change from PCUSA practice, which dealt with these matters under the specific offices. This organizational scheme implies that ministerial authority is fundamentally the same, but with different manifestations -- the

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[428]In Church Dogmatics IV/4, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), p. 201, Barth remarks that "all those baptised as Christians are eo ipso consecrated, ordained and dedicated to the ministry of the Church." He goes on to observe that other ordinations are, effectively, a devaluation of baptism.

[429]The UPCNA, whose antecedents dated back to 1744, was comprised of elements of the Scottish Covenant and Seceder tradition. The greatest concentration of UPCNA churches were in Western Pennsylvania and Ohio.

PCUS view.[430]

The Plan for Union drops the PCUSA language concerning the laying on of hands by "the ministers of the presbytery" at ministerial ordinations, in favor of the vaguer PCUS language, by "the presbytery."[431] While this provision does not mandate the participation of elders in ministers' ordinations, it certainly permits it.

No sooner had reunion between the PCUSA and the UPCNA been accomplished, than the new United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (UPCUSA) was faced with the need to further refine its ordination theology. The post-war era had brought the church a proliferation of non-parish ministers (ordained ministers serving as military chaplains, campus ministers, professors of religion, directors of social-service agencies and the like), creating in many urban presbyteries an imbalance between ministers and elders. This led to a 1958 overture from Chicago Presbytery, asking for a study of the nature of ministry and ordination.

The overture persuaded the UPCUSA General Assembly to appoint a Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry, whose instructions were:

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[430]Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, The Plan Providing for the Union of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America and the Presbyterian Church in the United States and the United Presbyterian Church of North America as the Presbyterian Church of the United States, (The Joint Negotiating Committee, 1954).

[431]The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education, 1956), XV,5; Plan for Union, XXII,6; Book of Church Order, XXV,142.

> ...to study the nature of the ministry of the Church (including also the whole matter of ordination) that the doctrinal basis of our diversified ministries may be clarified, that the Church may provide for the adequate training of its several ministries and their proper relationship to the life and work of the church.[432]

The committee undertook to lead Presbyterians through a massive churchwide study of ministry and ordination, in an effort to seek out and establish consensus, prior to making any specific recommendations. The paper produced by the committee for churchwide study, The Church and Its Changing Ministry, seeks to advance an "instrumental conception of ministry," which conceives the minister's role as leading and coordinating the people of God in their own varied ministries. It is likely that this "instrumental conception" was heavily influenced both by H. Richard Niebuhr's concept of the minister as "pastoral director" (expressed in his influential book of the same era, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry), and by the increasing role that the insights of secular management science were coming to play in the life of the church.[433]

In Niebuhr's radically functional understanding of ordination, ministers are managers of other people's ministry. Ministry belongs to the whole people of God, and it is the role of the minister of the word to equip God's people as they discover and

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[432]Johnson, Robert Clyde, ed., The Church and Its Changing Ministry, Study Material Prepared Under the Direction of the General Assembly Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1961), p. v.

[433]H. Richard Niebuhr, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), pp. 79ff.

take up their several ministries. The traditional pastoral tasks of preaching and celebrating the sacraments certainly have their place, but Niebuhr's "pastoral director" concept is an effort to lift up an additional function of ministry, that of management.

The Church and Its Changing Ministry explicitly argues for an action-oriented conception of ministry as always in service to the church's mission. Beginning with the observation that the Greek word tasso ("order") is a military term referring to the marshalling of troops for battle, it maintains that church order

> ...is never an end in itself. It is only a means to something else. Order is the Church readying itself, moving out on its mission, in obedience to the sovereign God. Different campaigns in the life of the Church may call for different tactics, and a quite different ordering.[434]

Continuing the military metaphor, the report defines church law or polity as "a plan of attack," ordination as "appointment to a post that is strategic for the accomplishment of the mission," the Form of Government as that which "charts the deployment" and an amendment to the Form of Government as "a shift of strategy."[435]

This radically mission-driven conception of church order is incompatible with earlier attempts, seen throughout Presbyterian history, to divine a single, God-given church order in scripture. The report is quite explicit in admitting this:

> ...these [scriptural] "offices" are not being reported to us as permanent, inflexible "orders," a conclusion that is inaccurate and misleading at best. They are, rather, displayed to us as the ways by which the Early Church

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[434]The Church and Its Changing Ministry, p. 20.

[435]P. 21.

> deployed its forces in the light of the particular campaign on which it was embarked....This means -- and it is often a hard lesson for Presbyterians, among others, to learn -- that every effort in subsequent centuries to use the Bible as a book of canon law, or manual of polity, inevitably lapses either into frustration or into nonsense. Every attempt to order the Church today either by a simple-minded or by a sophisticated appeal to Biblical "proof texts" sooner or later becomes comicopathetic.[436]

The report identifies a "biblical and Reformed principle" of "flexibility and adaptability" when it comes to church order and offices of ministry. Appealing to Calvin's flexibility on the question of whether the church ought to use the laying on of hands in ordination, and to his willingness to consider hierarchical bishops in certain circumstances, the report maintains that the only standard of evaluation ought to be whether or not the given practice aids or impedes the mission of the church.[437]

The report strongly emphasizes the priesthood of all believers, to the extent that distinctions between "clergy" and "laity" become meaningless:

> ...we have forgotten that in the New Testament the words "clergy" (kleros, share or portion) and "laity" (laos, people) describe the same persons. The clergy are those who share the "inheritance," or those who are "in Christ" or within the Church -- and this means everyone, too. Those whom we commonly call "clergymen" are laymen, for they are among the people of God as much as anyone else. And those whom we commonly call "laymen" are clergymen, for they too, as members of the Church, share the "inheritance" as much as anyone else.[438]

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[436]P. 21. This is, obviously, a far cry from Samuel Miller's de jure divino outlook.

[437]P. 23.

[438]P. 26.

The report sets forth four "Guidelines" for further study:

> 1. It is not the purpose of our ministry to seek the forgiveness and love of God, either for ourselves or others....God has already done that. As one body, we are commissioned as a priesthood of all believers to tell the world of this love and forgiveness...
>
> 2. No one is "ordained" to the Christian priesthood. We are baptized into the Christian priesthood. And everyone who is baptized shares fully, and should share equally, in the Christian priesthood.
>
> 3. No one is assigned the task of interceding to reconcile us to God....Jesus Christ is "the one mediator..."
>
> 4. No one who is ordained is placed in a special "order" of priests, above and separate from the rest of the body. When we ordain, we are appointing some members of the body to special, specified tasks....There can be divisions of function within the body but no divisions of "status" as we use the word today.[439]

These foundational assumptions are clearly functional in their conception of ministry; they emphasize the priesthood of all believers, and baptism as the universal commissioning for all Christians; and they resist any attempt to see ordination as imparting extraordinary powers to the ordinand, but instead see ministry as service of the one mediator, Jesus Christ.

Describing and then rejecting two historic "images" of ministry, the minister as example to the people ("the exemplary image") and the minister as representative of God and the people ("the representative image"), the report holds up an alternative image of ministry, the "instrumental" image.[440] According to this view, as ministers accept the commission to serve, they agree "to

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[439]Johnson, The Church and Its Changing Ministry, pp. 29-30.

[440]Pp. 40ff.

be the instrument of God's redemptive mission in and to the world."

In its 1964 report to the General Assembly the committee made several proposals that were quite revolutionary for American Presbyterians. These included three new chapters of the Book of Order, "Of Church Order," "Of the Ordered Ministry," and "Of the Authorities of Ordained Ministers," replacing existing chapters. Among the new provisions in these chapters were the following:

-- the creation of a fourth ordained office, that of "teacher"

-- recasting the office of deacon, so that deacons are specialized ministers, serving, with the permission of presbytery, beyond the local congregation; eliminating Boards of Deacons on the local level

-- allowing all ordained officers, at the discretion of presbytery, to bear rule in presbytery and to have permission to celebrate sacraments.[441]

In the proposed fourfold structure, pastors, the new deacons and teachers would all have similar training; pastors would be parish ministers, deacons specialized evangelistic or administrative ministers, and teachers those involved in ministries of education. Ruling elders would have much the same role as before. Under this proposal, the new deacon is closer to a Roman Catholic or Episcopal deacon -- a person having some theological education and exercising a more professional ministerial role.

The church's response to the proposal was tepid at best. In 1966, the special committee withdrew its recommendations, citing the social changes of the turbulent 1960s as a reason, and acknowledging -- a bit weakly -- that internal organizational

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[441]UPCUSA General Assembly, Minutes, 1964, Part 1, pp. 247-251.

concerns appeared to be of less concern to the church in 1966 than they had been just eight years previously, in 1958.[442] The committee also cited the imminent completion of the Confession of 1967 as a further reason for terminating their efforts.[443]

In its analysis of reasons for the proposal's failure, the special committee speaks of widespread "confusion" in the church on the subject of ordination:

> The struggle of the committee to arrive at a clear position on ordination...is representative of the confusion and indecision of the United Presbyterian Church...the range of responses [to the committee's survey instrument] made it abundantly clear that there is no consensus on ordination, on the matter of bearing rule in presbyteries, or on the ordering of mobility within the present diversified ministries.[444]

The committee had alluded to this "confusion" a year earlier, as it reported to the 1965 General Assembly on seminars it had organized at various locations around the country beginning in 1962, involving at total of 5,300 ministers and 4,800 church members. "These seminars," the committee reported, "confirmed that there is a restlessness within the church concerning the whole problem of the ministry...no clear consensus emerged."[445]

The committee did report that it had discovered a widespread

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[442]UPCUSA General Assembly, Minutes, 1966, Part 1, p. 195. While this observation was probably true, it is not in itself a sufficient explanation for the church's rejection of the proposal. On a political level, the considerable voting power of the specialized ministers undoubtedly had something to do with it.

[443]UPCUSA General Assembly, Minutes, 1966, Part 1, pp. 208-209.

[444]UPCUSA General Assembly, Minutes, Part 1, 1966, pp. 195-196.

[445]UPCUSA General Assembly Minutes, 1965, p. 256.

belief that ministry belongs to the whole church, not just to its ordained officers.[446]

The committee further reported that it had discovered three distinct views of ministry under which the church was operating. While these three views are distinct from one another, the committee's report observed, they are not completely incompatible; it is possible to hold elements of more than one simultaneously. Yet even so, the committee despairs that neither of these three viewpoints provides a sufficient foundation for churchwide consensus:

> 1) an individualistic, "candidate-centered view," in which the inner experience of call is primary, to the exclusion of nearly all else;
>
> 2) a "functional" understanding, in which ordination is simply a reliable way of insuring that a necessary function is performed (in this view, ordination lasts only as long as the particular function does); and
>
> 3) a "baptismal" understanding, which sees baptism as the only true ordination, there being no such thing as a clergy "class" in the church.[447]

Through the seminars it had conducted, the special committee had learned that the church had come to "a new understanding of the nature of ministry." Most elders in the seminars, for example, "discovered for the first time that they were ministers of the Church, and that the ministry belongs to the whole Church and is not something to be performed by clergymen alone."[448] The

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[446]UPCUSA General Assembly, Minutes, 1966, Part 1, p. 196.

[447]UPCUSA General Assembly, Minutes, Part 1, 1966, pp. 196-197.

[448]UPCUSA General Assembly Minutes, 1966, Part 1, p. 196.

committee identified three competing views of ordination as prevalent in the church at that time: (1) that ordination is related to an individual's personal call to ministry, and is for life; (2) that ordination is related to specific work in the church, is inseparable from installation and continues only as long as the particular work does; and (3) that all Christians are ordained as ministers, through baptism, or confirmation.[449] The committee was unable to decide which of the three views it recommended, and was equally unable to present an alternative that would allow the three to comfortably co-exist with one another.

One conclusion of the Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry, however, is of great interest with respect to future efforts on the part of the church to deal with ordination. The committee's 1966 summary report contains this paragraph on the nature of ministry as service:

> Therefore, authority in the Church is authority to minister. Church government, in all of its forms and manifestations, must be a service, a ministry. Authority is in order to service; order is for the purpose of mission; government is to the end of ministry.[450]

At the same time the special committee was concluding its task, the Confession of 1967 was in the final stages of preparation. This confession was the first American-written confession of faith to be adopted by the denomination.[451]

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[449]UPCUSA General Assembly Minutes, Part 1, 1966, p. 196.

[450]UPCUSA General Assembly, Minutes, 1966, p. 206.

[451]Not counting, that is, the "Declaratory Statement" and the chapter, "Of the Gospel of the Love of God and of Missions," added to the Westminster Confession by the General Assembly of 1903 --

The Confession of 1967 reflects a thoroughly functional concept of ministry. The "instrument of mission" language used by the Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry shows up here as well:

> The church thus orders its life as an institution with a constitution, government, officers, finances, and administrative rules. These are instruments of mission, not ends in themselves. Different orders have served the gospel, and none can claim exclusive validity. A presbyterian polity recognizes the responsibility of all members for ministry and maintains the organic relation of all congregations in the church. It seeks to protect the church from exploitation by ecclesiastical or secular power and ambition. Every church order must be open to such reformation as may be required to make it a more effective instrument of the mission of reconciliation.[452]

Furthermore, the Confession of 1967 promulgates a strong view of the ministry of every church member:

> Each member is the church in the world, endowed by the Spirit with some gift of ministry and is responsible for the integrity of his witness in his own particular situation.[453]

Although every church member can be said to have a ministry, the Confession of 1967 does preserve a place for particular ordained ministries:

> In recognition of special gifts of the Spirit and for the ordering of its life as a community, the church calls, trains, and authorizes certain members for leadership and

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Book of Confessions, 6.187-6.193 (In 1903, there was no Book of Confessions as there is today, and the Westminster Confession was the church's primary doctrinal statement; with subscription to the Westminster Confession still a requirement for ordination, some qualification of the more outdated portions of that creed needed to be made).

[452]Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Book of Confessions, 9.40.

[453]Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Book of Confessions, 9.38.

> oversight. The persons qualified for these duties in accordance with the polity of the church are set apart by ordination or other appropriate act and thus made responsible for their special ministries.[454]

In using the language of "leadership and oversight" to describe ordained ministry, the Confession of 1967 displays a thoroughly jurisdictional understanding of ordination. There is no talk of spiritual gifts for proclaiming the Word or celebrating the sacraments -- in short, there is little appreciation for the pastoral and liturgical dimensions of ministry. There is but one call of the whole people of God, and the principal role of ministers is to lead the people in their response to it.

The Confession of 1967 could not, however, address the continuing confusion in the church over the nature of specialized ministries. The Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry had failed in its attempt to resolve the situation; now it was time to try again. In response to several overtures, the 1968 General Assembly established a "Special Committee on the Theology of the Call." Its report was titled, Model for Ministry.[455]

Members of the special committee with scholarly credentials included the distinguished Barthian scholar, Arthur C. Cochrane; Arthur R. McKay, president of Colgate-Rochester Divinity School; and, as chair of the committee, Lewis S. Mudge, son and namesake of

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[454]Presbyterian Church U.S.A.), Book of Confessions, 9.39.

[455]United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A, Special Committee on the Theology of the Call, Model for Ministry: A Report For Study Issued By the General Assembly Special Committee on the Theology of the Call, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1970).

a former stated clerk of the General Assembly, who was at that time Professor of Religion at Amherst College.

Reacting to the widespread turmoil and confusion that characterized the church, not to mention American society at large, as a result of the social upheaval of the 1960s, the Introduction to the committee's report begins on a note of near-despair. Identifying a widespread "perplexity" in the church concerning the nature of the call to ministry, it speaks of the "immensely difficult problem of clothing the gospel with solid social substance in a day which seems to have swept most of its theological past into oblivion." As a result, the typical parish minister is portrayed as being in vocational crisis:

> Pressed into patterns of activity his congregation and society-at-large expect of him, the parish minister smarts in the knowledge that it could and should be different, and yet that he is the prisoner of an unconscious conspiracy of apathy and misunderstanding. Why must so many pastors, shorn of the roles and prestige they once had, live out their lives in culturally narrow, socially marginal, and personally heartbreaking situations? Can they possibly recommend this vocation to others?[456]

The Special Committee on the Theology of the Call begins its report, therefore, in a reactive mode. There is more than urgency in the language of its self-described context; there is desperation.

More than that, there is a crisis of purpose. Reflecting on the fact that the last special committee to study this subject had disbanded without consensus just two years before (citing the need

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[456]UPCUSA Special Committee On the Theology of the Call, p. 7.

to wait until after the Confession of 1967 had been adopted), the Special Committee On the Theology of the Call reports the uncertainty its members felt as they began their work in 1968:

> To ask the question bluntly, why should a new committee think it could do better than the old one? True, the Confession of 1967 had since been adopted. And the new committee's assignment was different, at least in wording. But were the real problems more amenable to solutions in 1968 than they were in 1966?[457]

By the time of its 1969 report to the General Assembly, the Special Committee on the Theology of the Call had come to see its task as building on the work done by The Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry, particularly in light of the Confession of 1967's theological perspective on ministry. The committee's perception of its task, therefore, was "not to develop a new theological perspective but to study the practical implications of the theology we already have."[458] Yet the committee had also become aware by this time of the depth of the water into which it had leapt. In its 1969 report, the committee questions whether it is possible at all to devise a polity or structure for the church that is informed by theology; perhaps, the report muses, <u>any</u> theology "conceived in abstraction from actual structure and practice is bound to be irrelevant....These issues are so difficult that the Committee cannot, in frankness, promise to reach a useful

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[457]P. 9.

[458]UPCUSA General Assembly, <u>Minutes</u>, Part 1, 1969, p. 302. The committee is obviously being extremely optimistic here; the earlier special committee, far from advancing a coherent position, had dissolved in confusion. It is true, however, that the Confession of 1967, in evidencing an instrumental conception of ministry, is fairly clear.

solution."[459]

The Special Committee on the Theology of the Call submitted its study report to the General Assembly the following year. The text of the report, Model for Ministry, was approved by the Assembly to be sent down to presbyteries and sessions for a year of study and response; the 1971 General Assembly extended this study period by an additional year.[460] The committee was invited to add an introduction, a commentary on the text, and appendices.[461]

The text of the report begins with a statement of the unity of God's call "to all the people of the earth, to the whole Church, and to every member of the Church, to the one ministry of God's word and work in Jesus Christ." "Baptism and/or Confirmation" are seen as the way by which Christians "attest and accept this one call of God to ministry with Christ in the world."[462]

Like the Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry, the Special Committee on the Theology of the Call sees ministry as mission-driven: "While the patterns of ministry found in the Scriptures and in the different Christian traditions offer valuable

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[459]UPCUSA General Assembly, Minutes, 1969, Part 1, p. 303.

[460]UPCUSA General Assembly, Minutes, 1971, Part 1, p. 40.

[461]UPCUSA General Assembly, Minutes, 1970, Part 1, p. 206. The separate report of the Special Committee on the Theology of the Call, published later that year with the specified additions, is Model for Ministry (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1970).

[462]P. 15. "It follows," says the commentary on the text of the report (p. 21), "that a Christian enters upon his appointment to the one ministry at the time of his baptism. If he is baptized in infancy, he personally affirms his acceptance of the appointment at confirmation."

guidance, they are not necessarily useful for all circumstances."[463] The committee cautions the church that "conventionality of form and function, in itself, are not enough"; it charges presbyteries to "continually rethink in concrete terms what relevance to mission means."[464]

Ordination exists solely for the purpose of advancing the church's mission:

> Many distinctions within the structure of the one ministry, inherited from formulations of the past, may no longer be appropriate. The distinction between "lay" and "ordained" ministry, for example, is not implicit in God's calling in Jesus Christ. While it is useful for God's people to include persons whose ministry enables the ministry of others, or whose tasks require special training and support, these persons ought not to be considered members of an "order" separated by some sacramental or status distinction. The practice of setting men and women apart for special tasks by prayer and the laying-on of hands is appropriate to mission in the world, but not admission into a clerical caste.[465]

So resistant is the committee to any distinction of status between ministers and church members that it recommends that celebration of the sacraments no longer be limited to those who are ordained:

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[463]P. 15. In the committee's commentary on the text of its report, there is a frank admission that scripture provides no specific model for ministerial order: "Attempts have been made for centuries to extract some ideal norm for the ordering of ministry from the Bible. But in this matter the Scriptures give us a variety of models with none taking pride of place....No form or pattern of ministry is thus sacrosanct. None, in and of itself, is of the esse of the Church. The form actually chosen needs to be functional in relation to mission....As the Confession of 1967 puts it, Church structures 'are instruments of mission, not ends in themselves.'" -- pp. 23-24.

[464]Pp. 17-18.

[465]P. 16.

> Worship takes place under the authority of the Word of God, but no function in relation to worship is reserved for a clerical order....While it is and may remain the norm in the United Presbyterian Church for a ministerial member of presbytery to preside at celebrations of the Lord's Supper and at Baptism, the corporate nature of Christian ministry implies that the Session has the authority to invite any communicant member of the congregation to preside at the Lord's Supper or at Baptism on any given occasion within the bounds of that congregation. The most authentic celebration of the sacraments is concelebration, in which all the people are understood to be celebrating together...[466]

Validation of ministries, in the case of ministers of the Word, is left wholly to the presbyteries, within several broad standards. A validated ministry, the report says:

> 1) must show "demonstrable relevancy to the mission of God's people in the world"
>
> 2) "aids and enables the ministry of others"
>
> 3) demonstrates "imaginative fidelity to God's Word," and
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> 4) must be carried on "in accountability to God's people for its character and conduct."[467]

There is no mention, here, of distinctive functions for ministers of the word, such as proclamation of the word and celebration of the sacraments -- indeed, the special committee sees these functions as belonging, in theory if not in practice, to all Christians. The determining factor in whether a given officer's ministry is validated is whether the governing body having oversight of that person (the session in the case of elders and deacons, and the presbytery in the case of ministers) says it is.

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[466]p. 17.

[467]United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Model for Ministry, pp. 17-18.

In other words, the special committee's view of what constitutes a valid ministry is wholly jurisdictional; a minister's call is validated if a presbytery admits the person to voting membership.

The General Assembly accepted the special committee's report for study, and commended it to the church at large for that purpose. Although the committee's four criteria for validating ministries were eventually adopted, no attempt was made to incorporate in the Form of Government the suggestion that any Christian can celebrate the sacraments.

In its Commentary on the text of its report, the special committee does not see itself as making radical changes in Presbyterian ministerial order. Should the whole "house" be demolished and rebuilt?, the committee asks. The answer is:

> Probably not, because the new structure would in time be as limiting as the old. Moreover, the Committee has been impressed with how finely tuned an instrument the existing structure is. Although it has often been patched and repaired, it is the product of a great deal of experience with human foibles. It is the summation of a great deal of case law. It does not represent the only way to organize a church, but it is one way....There is no reason why the Presbyterian system cannot give expression, organization and support to a ministry in the midst of the world conceived as this report suggests.[468]

In an appendix to the Model for Ministry report, Arthur C. Cochrane, a member of the special committee, writes on "The Doctrine of the Call" in the Reformed Tradition. One of the subjects he addresses is the nature of ordination itself. Comparing the methods of initiation in the Book of Order of the UPCUSA for ministers, elders and deacons on the one hand, and for

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[468]Pp. 26-27.

commissioned church workers and lay preachers on the other, Cochrane sees no essential difference between them:

> Lay preachers and commissioned church workers are "commissioned" by presbytery. Again the language used in the service of commissioning and the questions put to the candidate are virtually identical with those used in the service of ordination. As far as the "rite" is concerned it differs only in that the laying on of hands and the handclasp of "Welcome to this ministry" are reserved for ministers, elders, and deacons. However, prayer is offered at both the act of ordination and commissioning. We conclude, therefore, that there is no essential, that is, theological, difference between ordination and commissioning. No "indelible character," no metaphysical or supernatural powers are conferred upon the candidates by ordination and commissioning. The meaning is simply that of appointment to a particular function, office or form of the one ministry of Christ.[469]

In a report to the 1972 General Assembly, the special committee proposed a package of constitutional amendments, that were approved by the Assembly and sent down to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes.[470] The amendments failed ratification by the presbyteries by a vote of 72 to 79, and so never became part of the constitution.

If they had, ministry in the United Presbyterian Church would have been very different. These proposed changes included:

-- changing all occurrences of the words "member of presbytery," as referring to ministers, to "continuing member of presbytery" (this to make it clear that elder

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[469]Arthur C. Cochrane, "The Doctrine of the Call," appendix to the report of the Special Committee on the Theology of the Call, Model for Ministry (Philadelphia: Office of the General Assembly, 1970), pp. 60-61.

[470]United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly, Minutes, 1972, Part 1, pp. 310-320.

commissioners are also members of presbytery);[471]

-- giving sessions authority, with concurrence of the presbytery, to permit members of the congregation to preside at celebration of the sacraments;[472]

-- stating that "the celebration of the sacraments occurs when all the people celebrate together, rather than receive the gifts through an individual who performs the sacraments for them" (although "for the sake of order the sacraments are to be administered only by those duly appointed)";[473]

-- declaring that all church members are ministers: "There is one call of God to all the people on the earth....Those who hear and respond to this call through Baptism and commissioning become ministers....All who profess faith in Christ and accept responsibility for mission and governance in this Church are ministers of this Church, and entitled to its rights, privileges and duties."[474]

-- defining "continuing members of presbytery" as "pastors, teachers, administrators, prophets and evangelists, and in such other works as may be needful to the Church..."[475]

-- "The ordination of all Christians to the one ministry of Jesus Christ is their Baptism and commissioning"; however, those elected to particular offices "may be further ordained or commissioned to these tasks. What hereinafter is called 'ordination' is the commissioning of persons to be deacons, elders, and continuing members

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[471]United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly, Minutes, 1972, Part 1, pp. 310-311, 315-316.

[472]United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly, Minutes, 1972, Part 1, pp. 312-313.

[473]United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly, Minutes, 1972, Part 1, p. 313.

[474]United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly, Minutes, 1972, Part 1, p. 314,

[475]United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly, Minutes, 1972, Part 1, p. 315.

of presbytery."[476]

Holper sees the Special Committee on the Theology of the Call as operating from a wholly jurisdictional concept of ministry. Rather than beginning with the diversity of ministries and working up to the question of what role specialized ministers ought to have in governing bodies (as the Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry had done), the Special Committee on the Theology of the Call began at the top, with the jurisdictional concerns of governing bodies, and ultimately left any decisions as to the ordering of individual ministries to those governing bodies.[477] The norm, he says, is "political-jurisdictional," rather than "pastoral-liturgical" or "diaconal."[478]

One final development of this period deserves mention. In 1969, the UPCUSA General Assembly made it normative for elders to participate in the laying on of hands at a minister's ordination. That had been the official UPCNA practice since 1938. Prior to 1969, church practice had been permissive of elders' participation in the laying on of hands, but did not regard it as normative.

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[476]United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly, Minutes, 1972, Part 1, p. 317. Had this provision become part of the Constitution, it is questionable whether it would be meaningful to speak of ordination at all. The special committee was evidently very concerned that the word "ordination" conveys exclusivism, and therefore virtually dispensed with it.

[477]Holper, p. 494.

[478]Holper, p. 499. The diaconal norm, Holper notes, is particularly problematic in a church that has adopted a "political-jurisdictional" standard for validating ministries. Unlike ministers and elders, deacons have no access to the governing bodies of the church; for that reason, the whole office of deacon may come to be seen as "abnormal."

This was a further step in the direction of a thoroughgoing understanding of parity between ministers and ruling elders.[479]

Southern Church Developments

The PCUS, informed by Thornwell and his followers, came to see the eldership as a distinct office established by Christ, in a relationship of parity with regard to the office of minister. In 1879, for the first time, the PCUS Form of Government permitted elders to participate in the laying on of hands at the ordination of ministers.[480]

Yet even so, the PCUS stopped short of absolute parity, seeing elders' participation in the laying on of hands as arising not out of the elders' own ordination, but out of the elders' membership in the governing body under whose jurisdiction the ordination is taking place. Elders do not participate in the laying on of hands because they are elders, but because they are members of a governing body -- of a session in the case of the ordination of elders, or a presbytery in the case of the ordination of ministers.[481]

Over the ensuing years, the PCUS moved in several ways to

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[479]United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Minutes (1969), pp. 227-228.

[480]The Book of Church Order of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, As Approved by the Presbyteries, and adopted by the General Assembly of 1879, at Louisville, (St. Louis: Presbyterian Publishing Company and Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1879), sections 6,IV,2 and 6,V,vi.

[481]Holper, p. 323.

strengthen its emphasis on parity between elders and ministers. Beginning in 1925, the PCUS Book of Church Order went through a series of revisions, encouraging elders to take a role in preaching the gospel so the needs of the church in remote areas could be met.[482] In 1945, ruling-elder moderators of governing bodies were permitted, for the first time, to preach at governing body meetings. In 1961, all specific references in the Book of Church Order to ministers as being necessary to preside, preach or lead the ordination prayer at ministers' ordinations were deleted.[483]

In 1963-64, the PCUS moved to admit women to all ordained offices. The fact that the PCUS decided to admit women to all church offices at once, and not only to individual offices at first (as the PCUSA had done with the eldership and the diaconate in 1930 and the ministry of the Word in 1956), is an indication of the PCUS' comparatively stronger emphasis on parity.

In 1968, the PCUS General Assembly received a report from its Permanent Theological Committee, "The Diversified Ministries of the Church, With Special Reference to the Administering of the Sacraments, Ministerial Titles and Forms of Address, and the Office of Deacon."[484] The report was a response to two overtures, one

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[482]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Book of Church Order (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1925), X,41.

[483]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Book of Church Order, V,27.

[484]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly (Atlanta: Office of the General Assembly, 1968), pp. 174-183.

questioning whether presbyteries could authorize non-ministers to administer the sacraments, and the other requesting the Assembly to discourage the use of the title "Reverend," as creating artificial and unnecessary distinctions between people. The committee soon found itself engaged in a thorough study of the nature of ministry.

The report begins by affirming the ministry of all believers, and in fact observes that the word "laity" is "a theologically improper word," since the New Testament affords no distinction between "clergy" and "laity."[485] Closely following Calvin, the report identifies four ordained offices in the New Testament church: apostles, elders, bishops and deacons.[486] The office of apostle, it maintains, was limited to the first generation, and the office of bishop was "not distinct from that of elder."[487] The report follows Calvin in seeing the early bishop as exercising a role similar to that of pastor of a local church, surrounded by a council of elders and deacons.[488]

Responding to questions that had been raised about the diversity of specialized ministries which were at that time proliferating throughout the church, the committee takes a strong stand that ministry is common to the whole body of believers:

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[485]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1968, p. 175.

[486]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1968, pp. 176-177.

[487]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1968, p. 177.

[488]Institutes IV.4.2.

> All Christians are already ministers of Jesus Christ, and they need no ordination in order to discharge their ministry. The "laity" are called to minister just as much as "ministers" are. Their ministry is as diverse as the gifts with which God has endowed them....If the church were to ordain all who are called to minister, it would have to ordain all its members. And if the church ordains some as ministers in a specific sense, this is because the right preaching of the word and the right administration of the sacraments is the indispensable mark of the church; it therefore sets apart men as "teaching elders" who have received the necessary training that fits them for that function.[489]

The expression "teaching elder" has a long heritage in the Reformed tradition, extending back to Calvin himself.[490] Calvin understands the council of elders that he envisions surrounding the parochial "bishops" to be co-equal with the bishops in authority, and he therefore sees ministers and ruling elders as two aspects of one class of presbyters. Yet in the Institutes Calvin rarely refers to Reformed ministers as "teaching elders," preferring to call them simply "ministers" or, sometimes, "bishops." John T. McNeill indicates that the designation "teaching presbyter" was debated at the Westminster Assembly of 1644, with the Erastians and Independents unsuccessfully attempting to change the "Form of Presbyterian Church-Government" adopted by the Assembly to include this designation.[491] The precedent for the use of "teaching elder," therefore, while present in the Reformed tradition, is

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[489]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1968, Part 1, p. 180.

[490]Institutes IV.4.1, IV.11.1. Calvin's understanding derives from his interpretation of 1 Timothy 5:17.

[491]John T. McNeill, ed., Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, vol. 2, p. 1218, n. 12.

rather weak; even so, it has enjoyed great support in the PCUS, as is clearly seen in this document.[492]

The "Diversified Ministries" report of 1968 also lays the theological foundation for the creation of new ordained offices in the church -- a foundation on which would be built, in the 1980s, the proposed new office of "educating elder." Speaking of educators, musicians and those who serve church agencies in various ways, the report asks:

> Should the church, then, grant ordination to such persons, instead of the service of commissioning now provided for? Nothing in the Scripture or the standards would seem to forbid such a procedure. Although the standards declare that the offices of minister of the word, ruling elder, and deacon are "to be continued perpetually in the church (FG 9:2), they nowhere state that other ordinations are excluded...[493]

Sacraments, says the report, are to be administered only by ministers of the word; this is for the sake of good order, but also to insure that the sacraments will never be separated from "the context of preaching and teaching."[494] The committee leaves the door open ever so slightly with regard to utilizing elders for the celebration of the sacraments in remote areas, but it clearly does

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[492]It is possible that the widespread use of "teaching elder" in the PCUS led to a greater level of discomfort with the rapidly proliferating specialized ministries of this era than did the comparable title in the UPCUSA, "minister of the word." Theologically, the concept of "word" (logos) can be stretched a little more easily to include such diverse functions as counseling, administering and social service work than can the more functional title of "teaching elder." "Serving the word" can take a variety of forms; "teaching," on the other hand, is rather specific.

[493]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1968, Part 1, p. 180.

[494]Presbyterian Church in the United States Minutes of the General Assembly, 1968, Part 1, p. 181.

not consider this advisable except in the most extreme circumstances.[495]

In 1978, the PCUS again addressed the issue of ordination in the paper, "Ordination to the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments."[496] This study, coming so soon after the previous one, was necessary in order to answer certain practical questions, including:

-- Whether ordination is "indelible and permanent" -- how and under what circumstances it may be set aside;

-- How the church is to judge whether or not certain non-traditional ministries demand ordination;

-- Whether an "inactive minister" category is consistent with the church's theology of ordination;

-- Whether ordination to minister of the word is distinct from ordination to the offices of elder or deacon;

-- Whether church professionals other than ministers of the word (educators, musicians, etc.) should be ordained;

-- How the church is to understand the call to ministry; and

-- How the church is to understand the "functions and disciplines" of the office of minister of the word, as distinct from the ministry of all God's people.[497]

The report begins by affirming the essential unity of ordained ministry and the ministry of the baptized:

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[495]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1968, Part 1, pp. 181-182.

[496]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly (Atlanta: Office of the General Assembly, 1978), Part 1, pp. 377-395. This was in response to an overture from the Presbytery of Washburn, asking for guidance on the question of what kinds of work might constitute a valid ministry (Minutes, 1978, p. 360).

[497]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, pp. 378-379.

> It cannot be emphasized enough that each Minister of the Word is first and always one of the people of God, a member of the Church, a minister by baptism, and committed along with all other members to the mission of the Church."[498]

This understanding, the report maintains, has frequently been forgotten in the church, as confusion has arisen due to "unexamined assumptions about the word ['ordination'] itself":

> Sometimes the impression is given that ordination is an act of being clothed with some sacred garment, as when the terms "vested in office" or "divested of office" are used. Sometimes a kind of holy status separated from and elevated above all other Christians is implied: one is "set apart for the Ministry." Sometimes ordination is understood as automatic upon receiving the qualified theological degree. There may even remain the vestiges of ordination as a sacrament, which somehow confers special grace upon the person being ordained. Such notions are foreign to the Church's understanding of itself and what it recognizes in its ordained offices.[499]

That understanding, the report continues, is that ordination is a means of placing a person "under orders," of setting up relationships of accountability for the fulfillment of particular tasks. The ordained person should be thought of more as "set into" a task than "set apart from the normal flow of life." "Ordination," like the word "order," is a "word of implementation."[500]

The report sets forth a definition of ordination that is restricted to "God's purposes for the church":

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[498]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, p. 380.

[499]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, p. 380.

[500]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, pp. 380-381.

> Ordination is for the interpretation, application, and communication of the Word of God in preaching, in teaching, in administration of the sacraments, and in the exercise of pastoral oversight....All Christians are called to be ministers of God, fulfilling God's purposes in the world. Ministers of the Word are called to discharge certain functions in the life of the Church. These functions are critically important for the ministry of all God's people.[501]

This is clearly a functional definition of ordination; and of these three functions (preaching, sacraments and pastoral oversight), preaching is primary. Proclamation serves, in fact, as a sort of master image for ministry of the word. The report does mention celebration of the sacraments and "pastoral oversight" as well, but these are clearly subservient to the "central task," which is "[to be] a responsible interpreter of the Word of God."[502]

The act of ordination, the report maintains, "should be reserved for that place in a candidate's life where commitment to the Ministry of the Word, competence, and acceptability coincide."[503] The report warns against taking this last item ("acceptability") lightly, stretching the meaning of categories such as "teacher," "evangelist" or "student," so as to allow

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[501]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, p. 383.

[502]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, p. 382. In the case of specialized ministries, the report urges presbyteries considering the validation of such a call to require the minister "to reaffirm the primacy of his or her motivation for interpreting, applying, and communicating the Word and to show how the Word will be proclaimed and interpreted in the new capacity" (p. 388).

[503]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, p. 386. "Acceptability" refers to the formal acceptance of the candidate by the particular portion of God's people whom the candidate will serve.

ordination before a candidate truly has a call in hand:

> Whenever a presbytery allows a Minister of the Word to serve in some capacity for which ordination is neither necessary nor appropriate, and for which a baptized Christian is available, it runs the risk of dangerous deemphasizing and devaluating the importance to the Kingdom of the work of all the people of God.[504]

The authors of the report resist the temptation to create a list of acceptable fields of service for ministers of the word. Nor should there be, they maintain, an "inactive status" for ministers who remove themselves from the practice of ministry for a time. What the church needs to do, rather, is to insist "that all Ministers of the Word be, in fact, Ministers of the Word."[505] In cases where it is not possible to make such a declaration, the minister ought to be removed from the exercise of ordained ministry "in an honorable and dignified fashion to follow the new calling."[506]

While acknowledging the title "teaching elder" as applied to ministers, the 1978 report uses the term sparingly indeed, speaking instead of "ministers," or "ministers of the word." "Teaching elders," the report maintains, are in actual function "both teaching and ruling elders."[507]

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[504]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, pp. 386-387.

[505]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, p. 390.

[506]Presbyterian Church in the United States Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, p. 389.

[507]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, p. 391.

The 1978 report demonstrates a thoroughly functional understanding of ministry. The only "difference in office" between ministers, elders and deacons, the report concludes, "lies in the purposes for which the officers are ordained." Ministers "interpret, apply, and communicate the Word of God and perform such other functions in the Church which must be directly guided by the Word: government or administration, administration of the sacraments, pastoral oversight, etc." Elders "participate in the governing." Deacons "are ordained for functions of service."[508]

Finally, the act of ordination ought to be performed in such a way as to make clear that:

> ...promises are being claimed -- not powers conferred; that the candidate is being set into an orderly arrangement in the Church's life -- not being set apart from normal life; that the gifts of God are being recognized -- not enhanced; that a function is being provided -- not a status established. It should always be noted that the forms -- laying on of hands, Constitutional questions, formal charges, etc. -- are for the sake of public affirmation and dignity and are not necessary or sacramental rites.[509]

During the 1970s, the movement among leaders of the PCUS in favor of reunion with the UPCUSA was burgeoning. Having learned from the failure of the 1954 vote of the PCUS presbyteries, the leaders of this reunion campaign decided to approach the task from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. Grass-roots campaigns to organize "union presbyteries" and, ultimately, "union

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[508]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, p. 394.

[509]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1978, Part 1, p. 395.

synods," in states that had significant concentrations of both PCUS and UPCUSA churches, created a groundswell of support for denominational union. In the 1980 revision of the PCUS Book of Church Order, the title "teaching elder" (which had never become part of the UPCUSA Book of Order) was dropped, and replaced with a term much more in keeping with northern sensibilities, "minister of the word and sacraments."[510]

For all its pre-1980 talk about parity between "ruling elders" and "teaching elders," however, the PCUS continued to treat the two offices as different in several important respects. Ministers continued to be members of presbytery, rather than of local congregations; and elders who became candidates for ministry were not merely installed (moved from one manifestation of presbyteral ministry to the other), but ordained.

In the documents of the PCUS, parity has to do solely with governance -- with ministers and elders having an equal voice and vote in governing bodies. This is consistent with the Melvillian view of jurisdiction as normative for church office.

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[510]Holper suggests (p. 347) that this change was made in order to elevate "the liturgical dimension of the ministerial...office." It is more likely, however, that pragmatic political factors -- the desire to eliminate one of the major impediments to reunion, in the eyes of the Northern church -- prompted the change. Even so, it can perhaps be concluded that the Southern, Melvillian tide of assiduously guarding the parity between ministers and elders had perhaps reached its high water mark some years before, and was by 1980 on the ebb. The precise language of the UPCUSA Book of Order, incidentally, was "Minister of the Word," not "Minister of the Word and Sacraments" -- but the new PCUS version was certainly much closer to the UPCUSA terminology (and the northern church's Calvinist/Westminster understanding of ministry) than "teaching elder" had been.

In 1980, the PCUS General Assembly approved, and commended to the church for study, a proposal that a new ordained office of "educating elder" be created.[511] This was similar in some ways to the office of "teacher" that had been proposed (but later withdrawn) by the UPCUSA Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry in 1964. The PCUS office of ordained educator had an explicitly local-church focus, hoping to solve the ambiguity of the role of the professional director of Christian education, who to many minds was "not clergy and yet not a layperson."[512]

Other projected benefits for directors of Christian education included a vote in presbytery, the opportunity to set minimum compensation standards and standardized educational requirements. Proponents of the measure appealed to the precedent of the teaching office in Calvin's Geneva, even though the new "educating elders" would have been very different from the doctors of the Genevan Reformation, of whom there were never very many.[513]

The constitutional amendments to create this office were approved by the 1982 PCUS General Assembly, and sent down to the presbyteries for their affirmative or negative votes. It was

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[511]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly (Atlanta: Office of the General Assembly, 1980), pp. 478-490. The study paper was: "Ordination for Church Educators: A Paper Approved for Study and Comment By the 110th General Assembly (Atlanta: Office of the Stated Clerk, 1980).

[512]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1980, p. 484.

[513]For more on the Reformed office of doctor, see Robert W. Henderson, The Teaching Office in the Reformed Tradition: A History of the Doctoral Ministry.

reported back to the 1983 Assembly that the requisite majority had approved the amendments, by a vote of 39-21.[514] The 1983 General Assembly, however, was also the reuniting General Assembly that created the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The office of "educating elder" never came into existence, for the PCUS Book of Church Order was replaced that same year by the new Book of Order of the PCUSA, which contained no such provision. All subsequent attempts to establish an ordained office of educator in the PCUSA have failed.

The PCUS made one other attempt, prior to reunion, to address issues of ordination and ministry. In 1981, the PCUS General Assembly received the report of "The Joint Task Force on the Nature and Practice of Ministry."[515] This group, which met from 1979 through 1981, included representation from the PCUSA.

This task force presented a report that was rare in its brevity, as well as its frankness. Meeting on the eve of reunion between the two denominations, the task force found it impossible to present in its report anything other than some very general theological observations about the nature of ministry. The reasons cited for this were: (1) the recent history of both denominations, in which comprehensive reports on ordination and ministry failed to have their principal recommendations adopted, (2) "very great social and cultural change in the context of the church's life and

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[514]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1983, pp. 534-541.

[515]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly (Atlanta: Office of the Stated Clerk, 1981), Part 1, pp. 384-388.

work," (3) the need to think more broadly, in ecumenical terms, rather than narrowly, in Presbyterian terms, (4) the need to think in terms of the ministry of the laity, rather than of ministers of the word, and (5) "that this history calls for modesty on the part of any group entering into considerations of ministry as well as caution in offering solutions or new proposals. Neither the achievement of common understanding nor the implementation of theological insight are at all certain to be found in the life of the church."[516]

As for its general theological observations, the task force seems to revel in contradictions. It introduces these as "lessons and puzzles [that] should be clearly seen and faced, and calls the two churches to "live with such ambiguity with mature acceptance."[517] For example, ministers in the church are called to servant ministry after the example of Jesus Christ, but they are not called to servitude; ministry belongs to the whole people of God, yet the church often tends "to focus ministry on the clergy and to define ministry in terms of what the pastor does"; ministry is related to the "universality and inclusiveness" of the ecumenical church, yet is grounded in particular denominations; and the New Testament approaches ministry flexibly, with regard to the changing demands of mission, yet the church seeks to read into it traditional models of ministry, "at times [elevating] form over

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[516]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1981, Part 1, p. 385.

[517]Presbyterian Church in the United States Minutes of the General Assembly, 1981, Part 1, pp. 386, 388.

function."[518]

One of the report's paradoxical observations deserves particular attention, for it represents a mild deviation from the PCUS' single-minded march toward a functional definition of ministry (perhaps the presence of UPCUSA representatives on the task force had something to do with this). Noting that "ordained ministry has been increasingly defined in terms of function," the report observes that:

> ...there remains a dimension to ministry which is more than functional. One is a minister as well as one does ministry. Calling is to tasks, but calling is calling of persons to those tasks.[519]

The report goes on to acknowledge that, in one sense, the task of ministry is "representing to the Church its identity and mission in Jesus Christ." Ordination "gives or acknowledges a certain authority that belongs to the office and also to the person."[520]

This acknowledgment of personal authority in ordained ministry (as opposed to official authority, pertaining to the office) was something new for the PCUS. Until this report on the eve of reunion, the Melvillian functional conception of ministry had held absolute sway. Now, for the first time, there appears a willingness to consider a broader understanding of ordination, one which is perhaps fraught with ambiguity and even contradictions,

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[518]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1981, pp. 386-387,

[519]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1981, Part 1, pp. 386-387.

[520]Presbyterian Church in the United States, Minutes of the General Assembly, 1981, p. 387.

yet one which may be more appropriate to the needs of the reunited church.

The 1983 Reunion

The PCUS' 1980 deletion of the "teaching elder" language was the last compromise related to ordination that the southern church would make; once this step was accomplished, the stage was set for the northern church to adopt the greater part of the southern church's understanding of ordination.

This compromise on the part of the northern church is most clearly seen in the PCUSA Form of Government, G-6.0103:

> The church offices mentioned in the New Testament which this church has maintained include those of presbyters (ministers of the Word and Sacrament and elders) and deacons.

This is quite a departure from the language of the former UPCUSA, which had maintained:

> The Church offices which the Reformed tradition has recognized include bishops or ministers, ruling elders and deacons as derived from the New Testament.[521]

Moreover, the constitutions of both antecedent denominations had included a version of the following statement, which had first

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[521]Constitution of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (New York: Office of the General Assembly, 1983), section 37.05. The 1971 draft of the Plan for Union originally included the old UPCUSA language, but it had been removed by the time of the 1974 draft. Language removed in the 1974 draft is underlined: "The ordinary and perpetual offices in the church set forth in the New Testament are bishops or ministers and ruling elders and deacons. Both the minister and the ruling elder are known as presbyters." (Study draft of a Plan for Union [1971], 8-2, p. 39).

appeared in the original PCUSA Form of Government of 1789:

> The pastoral office is the first in the church, both for dignity and for usefulness. The person who fills this office, hath, in Scripture, obtained different names expressive of his various duties. As he has the oversight of the flock of Christ, he is termed bishop.* As he feeds them with spiritual food, he is termed pastor. As he serves Christ in his church, he is termed minister. As it is his duty to be grave and prudent and an example of the flock, and to govern well in the house and kingdom of Christ, he is termed presbyter or elder. As he is the messenger of God, he is termed the angel of the church. As he is sent to declare the will of God to sinners, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God through Christ, he is termed ambassador. And as he dispenses the manifold grace of God, and the ordinances instituted by Christ, he is termed steward of the mysteries of God.
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> *As the office and character of the gospel minister are particularly and fully described in the Holy Scriptures under the title of bishop; and as this term is peculiarly expressive of his duty as overseer of the flock, it ought not to be rejected.[522]

After reunion, there are but two categories of office in the PC(USA): presbyter and deacon. One category, that of presbyter, contains two subcategories: minister of word and sacrament and elder. Although the "teaching elder" and "ruling elder" language is gone, the underlying concept of radical parity between ministers and elders, with that parity defined solely along Melvillian jurisdictional lines, has become the official policy of the PCUSA. The distinctive individual functions of ministers and elders, including the historic ministerial titles of 1789, have been relegated to the background, and one corporate function -- governance -- has been raised to primacy. With the 1983 reunion,

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[522]United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Book of Order 1982-83, 38.02; Presbyterian Church in the United States Book of Church Order 1982/83, 10-1.

Breckinridge and Thornwell finally achieved their victory over Hodge.[523]

The emphasis on governance as the most distinctive characteristic of presbyterian ministerial order was the contribution of the PCUS to the reunion process, and the stress on representation of various constituencies was the contribution of the UPCUSA. Thus, the end product can be seen as a synthesis of both traditions -- although, as Holper observes, this "marriage" may produce "offspring" that may yet surprise the parents:

> In the Plan for Reunion, the "jurisdictional" model of presbyter characteristic of the southern church is wedded to the "political" model characteristic of the northern church. This "marriage" surely embodies the distinctive emphases of both traditions....On the other hand, the "offspring" (i.e., the offices of ministry) developed as a result of this marriage may prove to be too narrowly conceived to allow American Presbyterianism to function in ecumenical circles where the presbyterate is linked in an essential way to ministries of word and sacrament.[524]

Historically, there have been two traditions in the Reformed churches when it comes to identifying the essence of the church. Calvin identified two "marks of the church," Word and sacrament.

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[523]Holper holds that, while the PCUSA adopted the PCUS "political-jurisdictional" understanding of presbyteral office, it did make one significant change: the long-standing PCUSA emphasis on bottom-up "representation" (officers as representing the people, rather than acting as Christ's representatives to the people) replaced the PCUS "ecclesiological and theological" understanding of office as coming from above, established by Christ through governing bodies (pp. 531ff.).

[524]Holper, p. 568. In other words, the emphasis on a "jurisdictional" and "political" understanding, to the exclusion of the Calvinist/Westminster emphasis on liturgical functions (proclamation of the word and celebration of the sacraments) as intrinsic to ordination gives the PCUSA a narrower base from which to undertake ecumenical discussion on the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry documents.

Knox added a third, discipline. In its ministerial order, the Plan for Reunion is more in the tradition of Knox and Melville (who, as we have seen, further developed Knox's conception of discipline) than of Calvin. Word and sacrament are still present in the title of the office -- but, in seeing ministers of the word and sacrament as but one class of a generic "presbyter," the jurisdictional understanding has clearly come to predominate.

This may have been necessary from a political point of view, in order to make reunion happen. Yet the church is now faced with a clear opportunity, freed from the pressures of preserving a delicate reunion compromise, to forge a theology of ordination that will inform its ministry in the twenty-first century.

If there is such a thing as a "winner" with respect to ordination issues in the 1983 reunion, the Southern church clearly claims that title. That may have been inevitable, given the fact that the PCUS -- being much smaller than the UPCUSA, and therefore having more to lose, potentially, from reunion -- exercised a very real threat of vetoing the whole proposal, through its presbyteries' votes (as it had done to the earlier reunion proposal of 1954). The Northern distinctives of theological pluralism and a political system that calls for fair representation of diverse constituencies were carried forward into the Plan For Reunion, but these can hardly be said to be the most important issues, theologically speaking. The Southern church, on the other hand, saw its most cherished theological ideals on the subject of ordination enshrined as the standard for the new church: the

understanding of ordination as a governmental, rather than a liturgical, act and the principle of parity of ministers and elders as rulers in the governing bodies.

Holper contends that both sides compromised on the church office areas of the Plan For Reunion, but his argument is unconvincing.[525] Theological pluralism is a large, overarching concern that is much bigger than church office, and the stress on representation is a praxis issue. The PCUS was the big winner.

Holper is not convincing, either, in his observation that the UPCUSA was already moving in the direction of the Southern view prior to reunion. If the UPCUSA was moving at all in the direction of the Southern view, it was doing so only by default. The period of the late 1950s through the 1970s was a period of near-chaos as far as the Northern church's understanding of ordination was concerned; two failed General Assembly special committees are ample evidence of that. One could read into that chaos almost anything, including an intentional move in the direction of Melvillian jurisdictionalism. The simple truth was that, at the time of the 1983 reunion, the PCUS had a strong, well-thought-out -- albeit narrow -- theological rationale for ordination, and the UPCUSA had little to offer by way of alternatives.

In the next chapter, we will consider contemporary post-reunion developments in the PCUSA that are continuing to shape the church's understanding of ordination.

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[525]Holper, pp. 540ff.

CHAPTER 6: RECENT AMERICAN DEVELOPMENTS

The decade of the 1990s is proving to be a very creative time for ordination issues in the PC(USA). The biblical insight that de jure divino presbyterianism has no scriptural warrant is now widely accepted; that insight, combined with the Confession of 1967's mission-driven conception of office, creates conditions ripe for the development of a theology of ordination that is both traditionally grounded and appropriate to the Presbyterian church's mission as it enters the second millennium. Such a theology of ordination will function on two levels: it will combine a jurisdictional conception of office on the higher governing-body level with a mission-driven, pastoral-liturgical conception of office on the local-church level.

Since the 1983 reunion, two significant documents have had an impact on the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s understanding of ordination -- one an ecumenical document and the other a denominational study paper. They are Churches In Covenant Communion: The Church of Christ Uniting, the consensus document of the Consultation on Church Union (COCU), and the report of the Task Force on the Theology and Practice of Ordination to Office in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Consultation on Church Union Proposals

The Consultation on Church Union began in 1960, with a sermon

by Eugene Carson Blake, stated clerk of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., challenging the mainline protestant churches of the United States to work toward organic union.[526] The Consultation on Church Union was formed, as a way for denominations to work together toward such a goal. In 1970, years of effort culminated in A Plan of Union For the Church of Christ Uniting.[527]

This document asks the question, "What does God require of us now?", and answers it as follows:

> Christians are called to respond obediently to the new conditions God is now disclosing to us. In this spirit, we envisage a united church, embodying all that is indispensable to each of us, and bearing enough family resemblance to our separate traditions to verify their continuity in it, yet unlike the churches any of us has known in our past separateness.[528]

The Plan of Union goes on to lay out various articles of agreement, whereby the new "united church" was to organize its life and witness.

By far the most difficult obstacle had to do with ministry. The Plan suggests three ordained officers in the proposed united church: bishops, presbyters and deacons. Ordination would take place with prayer and the laying on of hands, "with a bishop acting

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[526]"A Proposal Toward the Reunion of Christ's Church," pamphlet of a sermon preached in Grace Cathedral, San Francisco, California, December 4, 1960.

[527]Princeton: Consultation on Church Union, 1970). Participating denominations in COCU at the time were the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S., the United Church of Christ, the United Methodist Church and the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.

[528]II,7.

as presiding minister."[529] At the time of union, there was to be "a corporate act through which all will offer their existing ministries to Almighty God, asking him to receive them through Jesus Christ, to complete and perfect what is amiss or incomplete in them, and to give whatever of his authority and grace is needed to serve in the united ministry."[530] The "service of inauguration" that was to commence the union begins with a mutual laying-on of hands upon one another by all ordained ministers, followed by an ordination of bishops from those former churches that did not previously recognize that office, at which formerly ordained bishops from other traditions would preside.[531] The Plan also contains an ordinal, which includes provision for the laying on of hands at future ordinations by a bishop, as well as presbyters, deacons and representatives of the laity.[532]

In the Plan, Reformed ministers of the word are identified as presbyters.[533] In addition, there were to be bishops as "a principal symbol and agent of unity and continuity in the church....[who] will authorize the church's ministry of Word and sacrament and will act in all possible ways as the 'servant of the servants of God.'"[534] Deacons were to be "a representative of the

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[529]VII,33.

[530]VII,31.

[531]Appendix I,6 and 10.

[532]Appendix II, 13.

[533]VII,42.

[534]VII,57.

laos," engaged in "a witness of loving service."[535] The united church was to be governed by various elected assemblies, composed of representatives of each of the three ordained offices as well as representatives elected by the membership at large.[536]

The Plan of Union failed to be ratified by most of the COCU member denominations, including the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. and the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. After that defeat, COCU continued to engage in ecumenical dialogue, eventually publishing a new consensus document, Churches in Covenant Communion: The Church of Christ Uniting, in 1988.[537]

At the heart of the COCU proposal is the concept of "covenanting." Rather than pursuing immediate organic union (which proved too radical a step when introduced in the 1970 Plan of Union), the delegates to COCU have introduced the intermediate concept of covenanting as one which they hope will prove more palatable to their member denominations. There is no doubt that covenanting is intended as a step along the way to organic union, though not an irreversible one. As Presbyterian liturgical scholar Horace T. Allen comments,

> This is a new way of going about Christian unity. Ministry and mission become the twin foci of the effort, though the ultimate resolution of ecclesiological questions is left in abeyance. The several communions, with their polities, are left in place. Many of us would like to think that covenant communion will provide the Western churches with the possibility of re-thinking and

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[535]VII,82.

[536]Chapter VIII.

[537](Princeton: Consultation On Church Union, 1989).

> re-working the traditional three-fold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon. The vision is to reconcile these offices as they exist among us, but then to explore how they may function in our various polities: congregational, presbyterial, and episcopal. It could well be that in this way we will all come to experience these offices in new ways and contexts, and thus begin to find our way both forward and backward, historically speaking, to a fuller expression of these ministries.[538]

Allen goes on to draw an analogy between the covenanting process and the Eastern Orthodox institution of autocephalous national or ethnic churches -- each one maintaining its own government and theological traditions, while at the same time seeing itself as part of a larger communion.

Building on mutual recognition of each others' baptisms, the member denominations of COCU would recognize each other "as churches truly catholic, truly evangelical, and truly reformed."[539] The most difficult aspect of this recognition would be the mutual recognition of each other's ministries, which would take place through a process called "reconciliation of bishops." This would include "words of mutual commitment to each other in covenant, and an act of mutually laying hands upon each other in acknowledgment of the authority of the other churches within which each will, from time to time, exercise elements of shared ministry through covenanting."[540] The Churches In Covenant Communion document takes pains to point out, however, that this liturgy of reconciliation is

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[538]"Commentary on the Inaugural Liturgies," pamphlet published by COCU (Princeton: Consultation on Church Union, 1990), pp. 4-5.

[539]Churches in Covenant Communion, p. 19.

[540]P. 22.

in no way to be construed as an ordination or a re-ordination.

Although reconciliation would begin on the level of national church governing bodies, it would not be complete until regional and local reconciliation liturgies had been completed.[541] Once reconciliation would be achieved on a regional (presbytery, conference or diocesan) level, "everyone who is [subsequently] ordained in that region will be ordained into an already reconciled ministry."[542]

In the regional services of reconciliation, bishops and "ordained ministers of regional episkopé" would lay hands on one another.[543] In the local services, "the reconciliation of presbyters" would take place in a similar fashion, as well as the reconciliation of "diaconal ministries" -- under which label the Presbyterian offices of both elder and deacon would be included.[544]

It is difficult to determine, from the text of Churches In Covenant Communion, which Presbyterians would participate in the laying on of hands at the regional services, since ministers who serve as presbytery executives are not seen as having an ordination that differs in any essential way from the ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament -- and since some presbytery executives are in fact elders rather than ministers. It is also difficult to

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[541]Regional and local services of reconciliation are included in the appendix to Churches in Covenant Communion, pp. 65ff.

[542]Pp. 23-24.

[543]Churches In Covenant Communion, p. 36. See also Allen, p. 6.

[544]P. 36. See also Allen, p. 7.

determine how the traditional Presbyterian understanding of ministers of the word and sacrament as the functional equivalent of bishops (with regard to word and sacrament, although not governance) fits into the covenanting process.

Although the COCU document professes to understand the liturgical dimension of covenanting as a "liturgy of reconciliation" rather than as re-ordination, the central role of the mutual laying on of hands in the reconciliation liturgies is the most serious point of contention for Presbyterians. The Episcopal Church is a partner with Presbyterians and others in COCU; in at least some Episcopal circles, apostolic succession through an unbroken historical string of ordinations continues as an article of faith. Although it was undoubtedly a major step for Episcopal delegates to agree in principle to a reconciliation liturgy whose text does not explicitly include re-ordination for non-Episcopalians, the presence of the laying on of hands in the liturgies may speak more loudly of the traditional Episcopal understanding than any verbal disclaimers to the contrary. The COCU liturgies may be seen by some as Reformed in language, but Episcopal in symbolism -- and this makes them extremely fragile, from the Presbyterian standpoint.[545]

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[545]Horace Allen presents a rather strained apology for the use of laying on of hands in the reconciliation liturgies by calling it the church's "all-purpose sign." He continues, "This sign has never been limited to rites of ordination. To regard it so would result in a profound misunderstanding of what these liturgies are about. The laying on of hands occurs at baptism, at confirmation, in reconciliation, and for unction. In fact, it occurs every time that most of us visit a seriously ill person....The rite proposed here is a rite of reconciliation, using that all-purpose and

Churches In Covenant Communion represents a bold attempt to overcome the most intractable obstacle to unity among the various Protestant churches in the United States: mutual recognition of each other's ordinations. This artfully-crafted document is based on a sort of unspoken understanding that each member denomination will endorse a common text, even while interpreting that text in radically different ways -- and that each one will participate in the laying on of hands in the reconciliation liturgies, while fully aware that the other denominations are understanding this non-verbal sign differently.

In this sense it is rather like the old fable of the blind men and the elephant -- one laying hold of the leg and imagining the elephant to be like a tree, one touching the side and imagining it to be like a wall, one holding the tail and imagining it to be like a snake. Once the COCU document makes its way to the member churches for formal ratification, the unity represented within its pages may prove to be ephemeral indeed. It remains to be seen

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powerful sign of the laying on of hands, together with prayer" (pp. 5-6). Although some segments of the ecumenical church may traditionally regard the laying on of hands as an "all purpose sign," Allen is mistaken in implying that this is the case for the Reformed tradition. We have already seen, for example, how Calvin distrusts the laying on of hands as possibly leading to superstition, and how the First Book of Discipline of the Church of Scotland omits it altogether, and in fact speaks not of "ordination" but "appointment." Disclaimers about the laying on of hands in hospital rooms to the contrary, Reformed Christians have always been hesitant to use the rite in any setting other than ordination -- and, in the early days of the Reformation, not even then. The greatest obstacle to full participation by Presbyterians in the COCU reconciliation liturgies remains the overtones of manumission that accompany the laying on of hands in those liturgies.

whether Churches In Covenant Communion will receive formal ratification from a sufficient number of the COCU member denominations to be considered a success.

The "Theology and Practice of Ordination" Report

In 1986, in response to an overture from the Presbytery of Carlisle, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) commissioned a new study paper on "the Theology and Practice of Ordination." The report was presented to the 1992 Assembly, and later published as A Proposal for Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination to Office in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).[546] Unlike many reports presented to the General Assembly, the Theology and Practice of Ordination paper proposes no specific constitutional amendments, although it does make a number of suggestions for change. Instead, it calls for "the engagement of the church with these issues" for an indefinite period of time, after which it will be up to presbyteries and other units of the church to propose whatever constitutional amendments they see fit.[547]

Members of the task force who have been noteworthy in

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[546](Louisville, Ky.: The Theology and Worship Ministry Unit, PCUSA), 1992.

[547]A Proposal for Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination, pp. 15, 144. This cautious strategy, of putting forth suggestions for change in a churchwide study format, then waiting for governing bodies at the grass roots to suggest specific constitutional changes, is likely a reaction to the opposition which constitutional amendments presented in previous reports on ordination (The Church and Its Changing Ministry, 1961, and Model for Ministry, 1970) engendered in the former UPCUSA.

scholarship or in previous denominational discussions of ordination include Robert W. Henderson of the University of Tulsa, author of The Teaching Office in the Reformed Tradition; J. Frederick Holper of Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary; C. Benton Kline, president emeritus of Columbia Theological Seminary; and Lewis Wilkins, Jr., general presbyter of the Presbytery of Palo Duro in Texas.

After some introductory material on the nature of the church and its leadership, the report of the Task Force on the Theology and Practice of Ordination advances a working definition of ordination; then it suggests a master image for viewing ordination, that of "God Service." It applies this master image to church leadership in general, and finally to particular offices of ministry -- according the "personal, collegial and communal" dimensions of ministry (borrowing the language of the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches).[548]

The report begins by observing, along with most modern critical scholars of the Bible, that "Scripture does not provide a single, unified, unalterable perspective on church office."[549] It then moves on to present a rather frank analysis of the limits of the sixteenth-century Reformers' field of vision, when it comes to

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[548](Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), 26.

[549]Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Proposal For Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination to Office in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), (Louisville: Theology and Worship Ministry Unit, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A., 1992), p. 9.

the nature of ministry:

> In the studies and debate of the Presbyterian church about ordination and ministry, there has been a consensus that all who are baptized are called to ministry and that those called to office in the church are called not to power, honor, or status, but are to share in a ministry of service, following the model of Jesus. Yet despite that consensus, the church still very much views office in terms of power, status, and privilege. In large measure, that view of office is a legacy of unexplored assumptions going back to the Reformation era. While the Reformers answered the questions of what kinds of power are to be exercised in the ministry of the church and who is to exercise them in a different way from the medieval church, they did not challenge the basic presupposition that questions of power ought to be the starting point for the understanding and practice of ministry.[550]

It is evident that the task force has seriously wrestled with the theology of power, a significant theme of the 1980s and 1990s, in light of the influence of liberation theology. The report goes on to advance a theology of ministerial order that earnestly deals with issues of power and powerlessness.

The working definition of ordination utilized in the report is as follows:

> Ordination is an act of the church in which the church orders its life by identifying and authorizing persons for offices of leadership and service in the ministry and governance of the church.[551]

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[550]A Proposal For Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination, pp. 10-11. While this is a rather large generalization, there is a good deal of truth to it. It should be observed, however, that the medieval church had other understandings of ministry as well, and that Roman Catholic scholars in particular may disagree with this summary statement. Francis of Assisi is a particularly noteworthy example of an influential medieval Roman Catholic who understood ministry as service.

[551]A Proposal for Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination, p. 16.

Several observations about the language of this definition are important. First, ordination is an act of the church. It is not a power inherent in certain individuals, by virtue of the fact that they have themselves received a charism of ordination. It is the church as a whole that ordains.

It is noteworthy that this definition does not include a role for God in the act of ordination. Ordination is described as purely an act of the church, undertaken in order to meet certain practical needs ("leadership and service"). In this sense, the report is the theological progeny of Andrew Melville (with his jurisdictional understanding of church office), rather than John Calvin (who, as we have seen, is not averse to labeling ordination a sacrament).[552]

Second, ministerial office has to do with leadership and service. The report holds these two concepts in a certain kind of tension -- for leadership often does involve power (in the popular imagination, anyway), and service appears to many to presuppose powerlessness. The special committee evidently feels strongly enough that the tension between leadership and service is a

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[552]In the Institutes IV.14.20, Calvin admits, "I would not go against calling the laying on of hands, by which ministers of the church are initiated into their office, a sacrament, but I do not include it among the ordinary sacraments." Since Calvin defines "sacrament" as "an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith..." (Institutes IV.14.1) -- a definition which clearly includes initiative on God's part -- it would appear that he considers God (and not merely the church) to be active in ordination. The Proposal for Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination does not reflect this understanding, but rather follows Melville in his tendency to define church office primarily in terms of governance.

creative one, that they have made these two concepts foundational to their understanding of ordination.[553]

Third, ordination has to do with the ministry and governance of the church. This is more than a Melvillian jurisdictional definition of ordination as governance (as in the 1983 Plan for Reunion); the element of ministry is also present, the pastoral-liturgical functions carried out by the individual officeholder. As we will see shortly, once of the great innovations of the report is to recommend that specific pastoral and liturgical functions be assigned to all three ordained offices of the church.

The report understands the essential nature of the church to be not governance or discipline, but a community gathered, in a multitude of ordinary places, for worship:

> The common word in the New Testament for church is ecclesia, which means an assembly or gathering of people. It is the word used for a session of a town council or for a town meeting. So the church is an "ecclesiastical" reality, which does not mean what we usually mean by ecclesiastical -- that it is holy or special in itself. Rather ecclesiastical ought to remind us that the church is indeed an assembly of people who have gathered together for a purpose and who are bound together by their common loyalty and by their commitment to one another as well as to Jesus Christ.[554]

"The primary form of the church since the days of the New

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[553]A significant modern attempt to combine these two concepts in a single philosophy of leadership is Robert K. Greenleaf, Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness (New York: Paulist, 1977).

[554]A Proposal for Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination, p. 17. This bears certain similarities to the image of the church as "the people of God" that is so prominent in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Testament," the report maintains, "is the congregation."[555] This simple statement heralds a concerted attempt to stem the rising influence of the Melvillian political-jurisdictional approach. The congregation -- rather than the presbytery -- becomes the principal arena for the pastoral and liturgical tasks of ministry, so it is no surprise that the report gives greater priority to these tasks than to the activities of higher governing bodies.[556]

The report also deals briefly with the New Testament foundations of ministerial office. Its treatment of these issues is somewhat misleading, for it attempts to paint a very complex picture in extremely broad strokes, on a restrictively small canvas. The following generalization is an example:

> The patterns of the New Testament are further modified as the church develops through the centuries. The office of bishop develops from local pastor into priest and then into regional overseer and priest. The office of presbyter, the elder of the New Testament, becomes the office of local priest, and the office of deacon is reduced primarily to liturgical function. The changes begin to appear in the second century. Following the recognition of the church by the Roman empire, there are further modifications in the fourth and fifth centuries and in the Middle Ages. The threefold pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon becomes established in history, however, and the claim is made that in its developed form it is rooted in scripture.[557]

The above passage seeks to portray the role of pastor as normative for the New Testament church, with the priest as a later

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[555]A Proposal for Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination, p. 20.

[556]Not that the report neglects the importance of the church beyond the local gathered community; it does assert that the church is also catholic, and does not end at the congregation (p. 21).

[557]P. 24.

level of tradition built on top of that. This judgment betrays a whiff of de jure divino thinking. In fact, diversity of forms of ministry in the early church was so widespread that it is impossible to posit a normative ministerial office of any sort. We can certainly assert that there was a ministerial function of service present from the earliest days, but -- in all modesty and with respect to other ecclesiastical traditions -- we must observe that it was carried out in different ways in different localities, and that no single contemporary tradition preserves the ministry of the apostles in all purity.

The report includes a very helpful analysis of authority and power, with respect to ministerial office:

> Often the terms authority and power have been used interchangeably. We can recognize, however, that having power does not grant authority automatically and that authority needs to be legitimated in other ways than power. And we can recognize that an allocation of authority, while it may carry with it certain power, does not give absolute power and is not the only source of power. In this context we may say that authority is allocated to an office or for the exercise of a particular responsibility in the church, and power is a gift of God to be used in the office or task in the way of God Service.[558]

Any modern discussion of power and authority in ministry, in order to be faithful to the contemporary context, must deal seriously with objections raised from the standpoint of feminist and liberation theology. Such theologies are concerned especially with the powerless, and tend to define discipleship in terms of a Christlike vocation of downward mobility. For some, any claim of

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[558]P. 26.

power or authority on behalf of the church seems inherently oppressive.[559]

In light of this reality, the special committee takes a strong stand in favor of retaining a sense of authority as applied to ministry, particularly the pastoral-liturgical authority of Word and sacrament. Such pastoral authority is a hallmark of the Reformed tradition.

The report observes that "Jesus fully embracing his power gives it away." Further, it makes the observation that service is not to be confused with subservience.[560]

The report is critical of the church's tendency to think of office only in terms of status or power:

> This has resulted in a practice of ministry in which only those offices of leadership which involve the exercise of certain kinds of political power have managed to flourish. For Presbyterians, this has resulted in a devaluation, for example, of the office of deacon.[561]

The report is unapologetic about its use of "authority" and "power" in connection with ministry:

> The issue for ministry is not one of power versus powerlessness, but rather that of the nature of authority and how it is exercised....[Jesus' authority is] an authority of service rather than an authority of power.[562]

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[559]See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Waiting at Table: A Critical Feminist Theological Reflection On Diakonia," in Diakonia: A Church For Others, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Norbert Mette (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), pp. 84-94: "The theology of service has different implications for men and women, ordained and non-ordained, powerful and powerless."

[560]p. 27.

[561]p. 32.

[562]p. 41.

As an example, the report cites Jesus' appearance before Pilate (John 19:10-11): "There is moral and spiritual power [in Jesus] before which the temporal power seems to pale."[563]

Ministry is service, certainly, but it also carries with it a certain measure of authority. Ordination itself may be seen as the church's recognition of a gift of divine authority, bestowed upon an individual by the power of the Holy Spirit. This authority does not belong to the individual as a personal possession, but it is present in the servanthood of the minister who faithfully performs the pastoral-liturgical duties of the office.

The report demonstrates a thoroughgoing conception of servant leadership. We have seen how, in its definition of ordination, the report unapologetically uses "leadership and service" together, in creative tension. "Leaders," it continues later, "are to be servants in the authority of office and in the power of the Spirit."[564]

The Proposal for Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination identifies three dimensions of call, according to the Reformed tradition:

1) the general call to be a Christian;

2) the call to service; and

3) the call to a particular ministry.[565]

In this, the authors are acknowledging that there is a general

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[563]P. 42.

[564]P. 28.

[565]P. 28.

calling for all Christians. Baptism, the report asserts, is the sign and seal of the first two dimensions of the call. Ordination, then, is the sign of the third dimension of call, the dimension of particular ministry.

The report does not rule out the possibility of expanding the church's ordination practice, or of developing ordination-like rites of commissioning, in order that the church may recognize calls to non-traditional forms of particular Christian service:

> The church has been inclined only to recognize liturgically those calls to ordained office, although there have been public recognitions in services of commissioning for other service in the church. The Directory for Worship now suggests commissioning as a public recognition for service outside the church as well as in it (Book of Order, W-4.3000).[566]

The second part of the report introduces the foundational concept of "God Service" -- an English translation of the German term Gottesdienst.[567] This concept of God Service the report calls

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[566]Pp. 28-29. A related issue that has occupied the attention of the PC(USA) in recent years, as well as its antecedent denominations, has been the proposal to create a fourth ordained office, that of educator (see "Southern Church Developments," in Chapter Five). The report is clearly not recommending ordination for such persons, but is rather making a plea for certain liturgical rites of commissioning that may serve to recognize the particular ministry of such individuals, as part of the ministry of all believers.

[567]P. 32. Gottesdienst literally means "God-service," but in common parlance means something similar to "worship service." For this reason, the concept of God Service is especially significant as a foundation for this report, for it preserves the close link between worship and work that has always been a characteristic of the Reformed tradition. Ministry as God Service is ministry that takes seriously the pastoral-liturgical dimensions of office. For a fuller treatment of the meaning of Gottesdienst, see Gordon S. Huffman, Jr., The Community As Dienst: A Study of the Ministry of the Church in the Theology of Karl Barth (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 1976).

"a basic image" and "a compelling model."

Although the report does not explicitly acknowledge the connection, the notion of Gottesdienst is closely related to the theology of Karl Barth. In the Church Dogmatics, Barth has this to say about the nature of ministry as service:

> ...vocation (klesis, vocatio)....is the event in which man is set and instituted in actual fellowship with Jesus Christ, namely, in the service of His prophecy, in the ministerium Verbi divini, of the Word of reconciliation, and therefore in the service of God and his fellow-men.[568]

In the Reformed understanding, God Service or ministry is a task belonging to the whole community. When the community neglects that understanding, conceiving of ministry only in terms of specific, ordained offices, the church is cast loose from its moorings:

> ...the focus on the texts dealing with office as the starting point has led to a viewing of the exercise of these offices in isolation from the ministry of the whole people of God. The result has been a tendency to focus on the individual character of the officeholder in such a way as to isolate and separate and create hierarchy, rather than to look at ministry in office relationally.[569]

The concept of God Service is, overall, a positive development. It is probably the most distinctive concept in the report of the special committee, and the single feature by which the report is most likely to be remembered. One might wish, however, that the committee had found a more biblical expression to

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[568]Barth, Karl, Church Dogmatics, IV/3,2, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1962), p. 482.

[569]P. 32.

use as its master concept. "God Service" or Gottesdienst is simply the German word for "worship," and its use, literally translated, in an English-language document, trades to some degree on the strangeness of the German.

The Greek word diakonia, well-known to English-speakers already as the basis of the word "deacon," would have better served the committee, for it would directly link the document to the biblical material. The word "diakonia" represents, in fact, the New Testament's foundational understanding of ministry; the report would have been strengthened by a more explicit expression of this linkage with scripture.[570] The ubiquity of diakonia in the New Testament is not always realized by those not having an

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[570]We have previously cited John Collins' study of the word diakonia in the New Testament and early church sources, Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources On p. 120, Collins contends that the common usage of the word diakonia -- especially in ecumenical circles -- as referring to the church's social welfare work has scant precedent in either the New Testament or the patristic writings. Diakonia, Collins argues, means simply service, without any implication of work on behalf of social justice, empowering the disenfranchised, etc. Collins also remarks that one office that seems remarkably close in function to that of the deacon in the early church is the eldership of the Church of Scotland. In making this observation, he quotes approvingly T.F. Torrance's booklet, The Eldership in the Reformed Church (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1984), in which Torrance argues on behalf of a revitalized eldership, according to his own interpretation of the biblical office of deacon. Torrance has an earlier, very helpful theological essay on this same subject, "Service in Jesus Christ," in Service in Christ: Essays Presented to Karl Barth on his 80th Birthday, ed. James I. McCord and T.H.L. Parker (London: Epworth, 1966), pp. 1-16. Torrance's argument, which has created much discussion in the Church of Scotland, has failed to engender any substantive change in church practice, and in fact has been received with suspicion by those who are inclined to distrust the tentative ecumenical consensus that has been built around the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry text of the World Council of Churches.

acquaintance with the Greek, for -- as we have seen in Chapter One -- the variety of English words used to translate it ("servant," "minister," "deacon," to name a few of the most common) obscures the unity of the New Testament concept of servant ministry.[571]

The report does deal briefly with the word diakonia, however, and also -- to a lesser extent -- the words doulos and leitourgia.[572]

The report sets out a number of specific implications of God Service. First, God Service "follows the model of Christ."[573] This Christocentric focus is significant, for it places Jesus himself, the self-emptying Lord who becomes the servant of the human race, before the church as the model for all its ministries.

Second, God Service "is done freely."[574] This is an indirect answer to the feminist and liberationist critique of servanthood-based conceptions of ministry. If servant ministry is imposed on

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[571]See also the earlier essay by C.E.B. Cranfield, "Diakonia in the New Testament," in Service in Christ: Essays Presented to Karl Barth on his 80th Birthday, ed. James I. McCord and T.H.L. Parker (London: Epworth, 1966), pp. 37-48.

[572]Doulos is of less importance, for it is not used to refer to ministry, meaning instead a literal household slave; the most interesting occurrence is in Philippians 2:7, in which Jesus is spoken of as having "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave." Leitourgia is also less relevant, for it is a specialized term referring to the "service" of the Temple sacrifice, and therefore is rarely used in the New Testament. If Christ, "the great high priest" of the letter to the Hebrews, has indeed performed the atoning sacrifice once and for all, then it is inappropriate for the church to rely on leitourgia as a foundational concept for describing its own, human ministry.

[573]Pp. 34-36.

[574]Pp. 37-39.

someone, then it is oppressive, and not truly ministry; yet if it is freely chosen, it is the way of Christ.

Third, God Service "encompasses a multiplicity of activities."[575] This is an indirect answer to another problem that has plagued the church in recent years, the problem of validating specialized ministries. This aspect of God Service provides a foundation for ministries that do not express themselves in the traditional pastoral-liturgical terms of proclamation of the word and celebration of the sacraments.

Fourth, God Service "is empowering."[576] This is a further answer to the liberationist critique. Not only is God Service freely chosen, it actually conveys power to the disenfranchised.

Finally, God Service "supports an understanding of church office in which leadership is exercised in personal, collegial and communal ways."[577] This, of course, is a specific reference to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, and as such bears witness to the special committee's desire that the PCUSA's understanding of ordination not stand in the way of ecumenical consensus.[578]

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[575]Pp. 39-41.

[576]Pp. 41-45.

[577]Pp. 45-48.

[578]One might have wished that the special committee had not borrowed so directly from the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry language in writing its report. To some Presbyterians who are inclined a priori to be suspicious of the ecumenical movement, the presence of this language may convey the impression that advancing the organic union of churches is a hidden agenda of the document (and, in point of fact, developing a theology of ordination that is "ecumenically intelligible" was part of the special committee's mandate). If the committee had organized its argument along more

The special committee's desire to recover the pastoral-liturgical focus of ministry (as over against the political-jurisdictional understanding) is clear throughout the report. The following passage, which ties the servant ideal of ministry to the liturgically significant events of the Last Supper, is typical:

> It is significant that Jesus' vivid example of God Service, the foot washing, is set in the context of table fellowship. Only in this eucharistic framework, when Christ becomes formed in us in the breaking of bread, can we move toward the kind of God Service which does not perpetuate unequal power relationships, but which moves toward relationships of friendship and love which empower people and activate them. God's household is ordered around a table, where relationships of mutuality and self-giving service are elevated rather than relationships of status and authority.[579]

Not only is the story of the footwashing useful here as a counter-argument to the liberationist critique of servant ministry, it also places ministry -- as no other biblical passage can do -- in the context of pastoral-liturgical service. The story of the footwashing brings together many disparate strands that together comprise the Reformed understanding of ordination: there is the element of diakonia, or service; the liturgical setting (the footwashing, after all, replaces the institution of the Lord's Supper in John); the deeper meaning of "liturgical" as leitourgia, the high priestly sacrifice of Christ for us, after whose example all ministry is ordered; the parity among God's people that arises

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distinctive Reformed lines (such as Calvin's or Knox's marks of the church, for example), its case would have been strengthened. This is particularly so in light of the fact that the report subsequently uses the "personal, collegial, communal" structure as the organizing principle for its discussion of individual offices.

[579]P. 44.

out of true fellowship around the Lord's table; and the great commandment (mandatum) of "Maundy" Thursday -- that, above all, Christ's disciples are to "love one another."

The third part of the report deals with offices of ministry. This section begins with an expanded definition of ordination:

> Ordination is an act by which those God calls to necessary, representative offices of leadership in God Service are identified and authorized for their work. The word ordination is derived from the word "order." In ordination the church orders itself for the ministry of God Service, authorizing and inducting women and men with particular gifts to equip and lead it in its service of God's reign in the world.[580]

Besides liturgical elements such as prayer and the laying on of hands, the report identifies three elements of ordination which need to be present in the case of all three presbyterian offices of ministry. They are: (1) testing of the inner call, (2) election by the community and (3) ratification by a governing body.[581]

These three steps do not need to occur in the order given. In the case of congregational offices such as elder or deacon, for example, it may well be the case that the community will first elect the individual, propelling that person into a period of

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[580]P. 51. The penultimate draft of the report, A Proposal for Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination to Office in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), draft of July 31, 1991 (Louisville, Ky.: manuscript circulated by the Theology and Worship Ministry Unit, 1991), p. III-3, contained the words "set apart" in place of the words "identified and authorized," and again for the word "inducting." It is difficult to determine why the special committee decided to forsake the traditional "set apart" language with respect to ordination, but it may have something to do with a desire to emphasize the common task of ministry, in which all baptized Christians participate.

[581]P. 51. A similar list is recapped on pp. 60-61.

introspection, during which he or she will become aware of a sense of inner call. It is not the chronological order that is important, but the presence of all three elements by the time ordination takes place.

The report makes a number of specific suggestions for changes to existing church offices. First it recommends changes for the office of minister.

The first of these changes has to do with the name of the office itself. "Minister of Word and Sacrament" would become "Minister of the Gospel."[582] This is a very old term in Reformed usage, and the special committee recommends a return to it out of a concern for inclusiveness of specialized ministers. ("Minister of Word and Sacrament," the report maintains, has too much of a local-congregational focus. "Teaching Elder" and "Minister of the Word," two other labels of impressive theological lineage, the committee rejected for similar reasons.)[583]

The second recommendation for change in the office of Minister of the Gospel has to do with the enumeration of six "core functions." Not every one of these would be reflected on a regular basis in the work of every minister, but at least several would presumably be present in every case.

That authoritative proclamation of the Word heads this list comes as no surprise, for the Reformed tradition has long seen

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[582]P. 63.

[583]P. 64.

preaching as the single most distinctive ministerial function.[584]

Community formation and edification of the body (core functions two and five) may be considered together, for they are similar. "Edification of the body" is of course a classic New Testament concept, but the report places it in an extremely contemporary light by linking it to the problems of alienation and excessive individualism which are so prevalent in American society.[585]

Leadership in governance is the third core function. This, too, is no surprise, for it is also a classic Reformed principle, particularly for followers of the political-jurisdictional approach of Melville. The special committee makes it clear, however, that "leadership in governance" may not necessarily mean the same thing as voting in a governing body:

> With the recent increase in the number of ministers on the rolls of presbytery who are not serving as pastors of local congregations...the time may be ripe for a creative re-thinking of diverse ways in which this core function of leadership in governance can be exercised apart from 'the vote' in presbytery...[586]

Fourth, there is prophetic witness to God's reign and purpose in the world.[587] This function, too, is classically Reformed -- although church pronouncements of the past have not, perhaps,

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[584]P. 64.

[585]P. 64-65. On the church's response to human alienation, see Robert Bellah, et. al., Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[586]P. 65.

[587]P. 65.

linked it so explicitly to ordination. The Reformed tradition has always maintained that the church needs to be engaged with the world -- that a cloistered church, withdrawn into a search for its own holiness, is not living out the fullness of discipleship. The report makes a positive contribution in observing that for this to be true of the church, it must be true of the church's leadership as well.

Service of Table and Font is the sixth and final core function (the fifth, "edification of the body," we have dealt with under the first function).[588] This is defined rather loosely, so as to include functions such as teaching about the sacraments and leading people to the font through pastoral care. Yet even so, it is in this function, as well as "authoritative proclamation of the Word," that the pastoral-liturgical dimension of ministry is most clearly seen.

The church would recognize "three distinct forms or manifestations of the office of Minister of the Gospel": (1) Ministers of Word and Sacrament, in whose calls the tasks of preaching and worship leadership must be present; (2) Ministers of Education, who are involved in educational ministries; and (3) Ministers of Pastoral Care, whose work engages them in healing, restorative ministries. Those persons belonging to the latter two categories of ministers would require special training and authorization of presbytery in order to be able to celebrate the

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[588]P. 66.

sacraments.[589]

As a general principle, the report makes the observation that ministerial authority is based neither on the person of the minister nor on any earned "right" to exercise it:

> ...the personal authority of Ministers of the Gospel increases as they use it to empower others and diminishes as they attempt to seize or hold it. Ministers' personal authority is effective when claimed, as by grace and not by right, and when it is interpreted in ministerial and declarative, rather than punitive or authoritarian, terms.[590]

Finally, the report makes several specific recommendations for change with respect to the office of minister of the gospel:

The first is the re-establishment of licensure, or something similar -- in effect, a "learner's permit" to be held for a time, prior to ordination, for those who have completed their academic preparation.[591] This is spelled out as "a flexible period of licensure, lasting from one to three years," and including a mentor relationship.[592]

Second, all ordained officers, including ministers, would be members of local congregations.[593] This would not preclude

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[589]P. 68.

[590]P. 74.

[591]P. 77.

[592]P. 78. This is in many ways similar to licentiate status in the Church of Scotland. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has avoided having such a period of post-seminary supervised training in recent years, due to the fact that supervised practice of ministry in the United States ordinarily takes place simultaneously with theological study, rather than after the degree is completed.

[593]P. 80.

membership in a presbytery, but would be a means for specialized and parish ministers alike to benefit from "the context of a local congregation to support them in their life and ministry." It would offer the further advantage of bridging "the perceived gulf between the ministry of members and the ministry of ordained church professionals."[594]

Finally, addressing the problem of how to deal with large voting blocs of non-parish ministers in certain presbyteries, three alternative solutions are advanced. The first is to continue as before, with all ministers having voting membership in presbytery. The second is to enroll only parish ministers with both voice and vote, allowing specialized ministers the privilege of the floor only.[595] The third is "some combination of the two" -- in effect, leaving it up to each individual presbytery to determine its own criteria for assigning voting privileges to its minister members. The fourth and final proposal is to require separate votes by ministers and elders in presbytery, with majorities of both houses being required to pass a motion.[596]

In the section on the office of elder which follows, the report lays out six "core functions" of the office -- these need not concern us here, since our focus is on ministry of the word and

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[594]p. 80.

[595]This is the same suggestion that aroused such vehement opposition from specialized ministers in the 1960s, when it was advanced as part of the report of the Special Committee on the Nature of the Ministry.

[596]p. 81.

sacrament (and, in any event, the report does not call for major changes in the office of elder). The report does go on to observe, however, that elders are taking on, in increasing numbers, "professional" roles in the church -- from stated clerks, to executive presbyters, to administrators of boards and agencies. This development has tended to obscure, for some, the distinctiveness of the elder's role, which is the "collegial ministry of oversight." In other cases, there are persons who, by reason of skills or experience, could be very useful to higher governing bodies, but who are barred from meaningful participation because they are not elders.

Yet the report is not advocating that the Presbyterian Church should create a new office for elders who are also church professionals, or should suggest that those elders having individual leadership roles should be ordained as ministers:

> The most theologically inappropriate thing the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) could do would be to professionalize every office in the church, thus abetting the formation of a distinctly Presbyterian "clerical caste" and obscuring completely the fact that the call to God Service is made to the whole people of God.[597]

The eldership is a potent symbol that ministry does belong to the whole people of God. Indeed, the Presbyterian eldership may well be, as the report proudly suggests, "one of the most significant gifts that Reformed churches can share with the wider church in ecumenical movements toward church union."[598] In this

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[597]P. 87.

[598]P. 81.

sense, the eldership is also a symbol to Presbyterian ministers that their ministry is not the only one in the church, and that their ministry -- while important -- does not comprehend within itself all that the church needs to be or to do.

In order to meet more flexibly the changing needs of the church's mission, however, the report encourages the church to explore alternative means of electing and ordaining elders, other than through the local church. It may be, for example, that church educators, musicians or spouses of ministers may be able to serve effectively in higher governing bodies, quite apart from service on a session; yet it is rare for such individuals to be elected as elders. Allowing a presbytery to elect and ordain such persons to the eldership (with the congregation's approval, of course) would solve some of the difficulties that led to the PCUS' aborted attempt to create a separate ordained office of "educating elder."[599] Were this procedure to become well-established, it could lead some specialized Christian workers who generally seek ministerial ordination at the present time to move in another direction, one that would not constrain them to claim a call to "word and sacrament" where one may not be present.

As for the office of deacon, the report begins by acknowledging that there were two very different manifestations of this office in the antecedent denominations. In the north, the diaconate "focused primarily around the pastoral care functions of sympathy and service"; in the south, however, deacons were

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[599]P. 87.

responsible more for financial affairs and the maintenance of church property.[600] Rather than abolishing the office or folding its functions into those of the eldership, the report recommends that the church "reclaim, reform, and renew it in light of the church's call to God Service today."

A reformed diaconate, as conceived by the report, would be symbolic of the ministry of God Service that is meant to undergird all ordained offices in the church. Diaconal ministry would be an avenue of "sympathy, witness, and service after the example of Jesus Christ," yet it would go further yet, embodying before the church and the world "the kenotic or self-emptying pattern of Christ's ministry of God Service."[601]

Diaconal ministry is, in one sense, no different from the ministry of the whole people of God. Yet ordained deacons are to have another quality, that of exemplar -- being able to demonstrate kenotic service to the church and the world:

> Nearly every manifestation of the church's ministry of God Service could fall somewhere within the categories of sympathy, service, and witness; therefore, the specific acts of sympathy, witness, and service to which deacons are called rightly belongs to the whole people of God. But deacons, by virtue of their personal gifts, character, and authorization by the community, are leaders in these ministries, evoking, within the whole community of faith, patterns of relationship and responsibility appropriate to God's Reign and purpose in

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[600]P. 99.

[601]P. 99. The word kenosis, of course, is a reference to Philippians 2:7, Christ's own "self-emptying" to take "the form of a slave," and to become "obedient to the point of death -- even death on a cross."

the world.[602]

Deacons are called to a "voluntary assumption of official powerlessness for the sake of empowering others."[603] Deacons are to identify in potent ways with the oppressed and afflicted, taking their part in a Christlike manner. Although deacons are "not personally powerless," their "voluntary embrace of official powerlessness...represents to the church the moral authority of those among God's people who remain powerless and voiceless.[604]

Deacons also have a traditional liturgical function, although this is an aspect of deacons' ministry that is unfamiliar to many Presbyterians. The report encourages deacons to assist in the leading of worship, as elders already do in many churches. Even here, the kenotic aspects of diaconal ministry come to the fore, as the deacons' involvement in worship makes them, in their very persons, "liturgically representative expressions of the deacon's peculiar leadership role of embodying and evoking ministries of

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[602]P. 100.

[603]P. 101.

[604]P. 101. This is quite close to the misunderstanding of diaconal ministry that Robert Collins criticizes in his detailed biblical word-study, Diakonia (previously cited). This is clearly seen in the present document, which not only gives deacons particular responsibility for ministry to the powerless, but also says that deacons must have the spiritual gift of "a willingness to exhibit the scandal of the gospel in the corridors of power" (p. 108). Collins maintains that the biblical meaning of diakonia is simply "service," no more and no less -- particularly service of God. In its lyrical expression of the nobility of kenotic service to the vulnerable of the world, the report transforms this very important form of service -- certainly on aspect of what deacons are called to do -- into the overriding paradigm of the deacon's ministry, when there are in fact other ways that deacons serve that do not fall so easily under this ideological umbrella.

power-in-powerlessness.[605]

Rather than recommending the dissolution of boards of deacons (as some of the previous denominational reports have done), this document encourages a flexible approach to the diaconate. Churches that wish to continue boards of deacons could do so, while others could devise more individual patterns, perhaps unconnected to term service.[606]

Deacons would not vote in governing bodies, but the report suggests that they routinely be given voice in such meetings, particularly so they may speak with authority that is "moral in character, exercised primarily by means of persuasion and example."[607]

While the report does not insist that congregations do away with boards of deacons, there is a clear sense that this may not be the most effective way for deacons to order their ministry. Because of the stress on diaconal ministry as "sympathy, witness and service," there is strong encouragement to churches to devise flexible means by which diaconal ministry is ordered, particularly do that deacons may be able to continue their public ministry unconstrained by terms of office.[608] Although they are ordained, deacons would ordinarily not be installed, since they do not exercise "power to decide how the church's ministry is to be

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[605]P. 102.

[606]P. 102.

[607]P. 106.

[608]P. 110.

ordered and carried out"; instead, they would be "commissioned."[609]

The fourth part of the task force's report has to do with issues related to the ordering of persons in office. This section includes an even further expanded definition of ordination:

> Ordination describes the process by which the church identifies and authorizes those persons whom God has called through the voice of the church to exercise the core functions of leadership appropriate to the particular offices of minister of the Gospel, elder, or deacon. The term "ordination" refers both to the larger process by which persons are identified and authorized and to the liturgical event by which they are admitted to office.[610]

The paragraph goes on to say that ordination is for life (unless the church and the individual determine, through "a process of consultation," to modify that), that there is a separate ordination for each office and that no one person may hold two offices at the same time.

In order to further emphasize the necessity to the church of all ordained offices, the task force recommends that all ordinations be carried out by the presbytery (not the session, as is presently the case for elders and deacons).[611] Ordination services could take place either in a local church (through a commission of presbytery) or in a regular or special presbytery

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[609]P. 116. In general, the report uses the word "installation" to refer to those exercising decision-making authority, and "commissioning" to refer to all other ministries of the people of God.

[610]P. 115.

[611]P. 119.

meeting.[612]

Currently, instructions for conducting ordination services are located in the Form of Government, rather than the Directory for Worship (although the 1989 revision of the Directory for Worship includes, for the first time in the history of the denomination, a section on ordination). The task force calls for the development of what is essentially an ordinal, so that there may be standard liturgical resources available for use in ordinations.[613] Suggestions follow for specific modifications, particularly the significant mention of baptism as undergirding ordination, the advisabilty of celebrating the Lord's Supper as a sign of ecumenical relatedness, invitations to officers from other denominational traditions to attend, participation by representatives of all three ordained offices and development of new ordination questions to reflect the changed understanding of the various offices.

There is no such thing, says the report, as "mobility from one office to another." If an individual senses God's call to seek another office, it is proper for that person to be "released" from the office he or she presently holds and ordained to the other.[614] This, too, emphasizes the fundamental parity of the three ordained offices: the office of deacon, for example, is not an apprenticeship for the office of elder -- as it has effectively

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[612]P. 120.

[613]P. 122.

[614]P. 128.

become in some congregations.

It is not possible, in the view of the task force, to "lay aside" an ordained office; one may only be "released" from it, and then only by the action of the church. Such release may be temporary (due, for example, to disability or to changed personal circumstances), voluntary and permanent, or involuntary and permanent (in the case of misconduct).[615]

The final section of the report has to do with the question of constitutional norms for ordination requirements, and the role of higher governing bodies in interpreting or enforcing them. This has been a highly controversial issue in recent years in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), because of the question of ordination of self-avowed, practicing homosexuals. As the report points out, however, this general issue of constitutional norms for ordained office has been an issue throughout American Presbyterian history. The Old Side/New Side schism of 1741, the Cumberland schism of 1810, the Old School/New School schism of 1838 and the North/South split of 1861 all had to do, to one degree or another, with the issue of norms for ordination and which governing body had authority to design, interpret and enforce them.[616] Within the past century, however, the same issue has come to the forefront (albeit not to the point of schism) in the Fundamentalist/Modernist controversy of the 1920s, mandatory rotary-term service for elders and deacons in the UPCUSA in 1955, and judicial cases restricting

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[615]Pp. 128-130.

[616]P. 138.

from ordination certain individuals who do not approve of the ordination of women or of affirmative-action guidelines. In each of these cases, higher governing bodies (or their judicial commissions) enacted legislation (or issued interpretations) that restricted the freedom of lower governing bodies to ordain.

The task force's response to such situations is that there ought to be only two ways that a higher governing body could "bind the conscience" of a lower with regard to ordination. One way would be through constitutional amendment; the other would be through the appeal processes in the Book of Discipline.[617] A higher governing body would not be able to issue "definitive guidance," as the 1978 UPCUSA General Assembly did with regard to the ordination of homosexuals -- not, that is, without going through the process of amending the constitution.

The report of the Task Force on the Theology and Practice of Ordination, as we have seen, contains a number of provocative suggestions for change, while at the same time elevating the classical understanding of ministry as diakonia to a degree of prominence that is unparalleled in earlier denominational documents.

In the final chapter, we will explore this understanding further, as we develop a contemporary theology of ministry as diakonia.

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[617]Pp. 141-142.

CHAPTER 7: A CONTEMPORARY PRESBYTERIAN STATEMENT ON ORDINATION

We have completed our survey of the historical development of the Reformed theology of ordination, from the biblical period until the present-day struggles of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) with this issue. The persistent conclusion of our inquiries has been that there is no single pattern or blueprint, in scripture or in any of the historical sources, that bears sufficient weight to dictate the form Christian ministerial order must necessarily take today. The New Testament portrays a wide variety of ministerial orders, which vary according to the dissimilar local situations of the churches. The writings of the greatest figures of the early centuries of the church likewise show a diversity of approach.

It was only with the end of the patristic period that a consensus began to emerge, centering around the "threefold pattern" of bishop, presbyter and deacon. As Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, ministry came increasingly to be seen in an official (as opposed to a functional) sense, with these three offices coming to be seen as of the <u>esse</u> (as opposed to the <u>bene esse</u>) of ministry. Subsumed, and nearly obscured, under these official structures was the original New Testament vision of ministry as <u>diakonia</u>.

The Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century endeavored to recover something of this original vision (with some degree of success), but it was not long before a Protestant version of

official ministry had become established as well, in opposition to the Roman Catholic official view. De jure divino presbyterianism, seen especially in the American church in figures such as Samuel Miller, James Henley Thornwell and Charles Hodge, had become the unquestioned ecclesiological presupposition by the end of the nineteenth century. Rather than seeking to recover a biblical theology of ministry that was ecumenically intelligible, the leading lights of nineteenth-century American Presbyterian theology turned inward, crafting a theology of ministry around what they -- following Calvin -- imagined to be the universal New Testament pattern.[618]

Through all the changes that have beset the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its antecedent denominations in the twentieth century, ordination is the single doctrine within contemporary Presbyterian theology that has most resisted re-shaping.[619] Yet in

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[618]In their exegetical methods, the nineteenth-century Presbyterian theologians had not advanced far past those of the sixteenth-century reformers. It was only in the twentieth century, with the onset of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, that American Presbyterianism experienced a sea-change in its approach to scripture. The theory of non-Pauline authorship of the pastoral epistles -- to cite just one example -- has revolutionary implications for the Reformed understanding of ministerial order.

[619]There are probably many reasons why this has been the case, but perhaps the leading reason is that, in an era when the foundations of biblical authority have been systematically dismantled and completely rebuilt in two or three generations, there has been resistance to simultaneously re-casting the Reformed theology of ordination -- with all the implications that would have for the human hunger for spiritual authority. If the Bible, which past generations of Presbyterians have always seen as accessible to the ordinary Christian, is no longer so -- due to the ordinary Christian's lack of familiarity with higher criticism -- then the personal authority of the preacher takes on heightened importance in the life of the church. If twentieth-century American

the present day, the imperatives of ecumenical dialogue, coupled with a growing cognitive dissonance resulting from the inconsistency of holding a theology of ordination that is at variance with the dominant hermeneutic, is leading the church into a long-overdue re-investigation of these issues.[620]

We have seen how the mid- to late-twentieth century efforts of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its antecedent denominations to re-think its theology of ordination have resulted, initially, in some considerable confusion -- and how the most recent General Assembly study on The Theology and Practice of Ordination, with its emphasis on "God-service," provides a promising new beginning. It is my goal in this chapter to further explore the theological concept of diakonia, or servanthood, as a paradigm for American Presbyterian ministry in the twenty-first century, identifying and describing some themes that may perhaps serve as building-blocks for a diaconal theology of ordination.

These themes include the following affirmations, which I will describe in detail below:

1) Ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament is in service to Jesus Christ, the sole head of the church, and is a means by which the Spirit of Christ is particularly active in the community.

Presbyterians have trembled at the loss of the naive, literalistic view of the authority of scripture, then they have perhaps been reluctant to countenance, at the same time, a questioning of the authoritative ministry.

[620]Daniel Jenkins, in The Protestant Ministry (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), pp. 15-16, has described ministry as "the great ecumenical problem....The ministry is the hope and despair of the [ecumenical] movement, the chief agency through which its purpose can be fulfilled and the chief obstacle in the way."

2) Ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament is a means by which the marks of the church -- proclamation of the word and celebration of the sacraments -- may be seen more clearly in the life of the community.

3) Ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament is to function, rather than office.

4) Ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament is but one expression of the universal servanthood of all believers, and is therefore linked to baptism.

5) Ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament is initiation to particular servanthood for the one ordained.

1) Ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament is in service to Jesus Christ, the sole head of the church, and is a means by which the Spirit of Christ is seen as uniquely active in the community.

The title of "priest" belongs to Christ alone, for he is the sole mediator between God and humanity. No human being can, by word or deed, perform this function on behalf of Christ. Neither can any human being claim to exercise headship over the church on behalf of Christ, for Christ exercises this headship directly by his continual presence in the gathered community through the Holy Spirit.[621]

This has the consequence of making the church's ministry an order subordinate to the order directly imposed by Christ.[622]

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[621] On Christ's headship of the church, see Ephesians 4:15 and Colossians 1:18; on his high priesthood, see Hebrews 10:19-22. See also Calvin, Institutes IV.6.9.

[622] T.F. Torrance calls it a "subministration"--Royal Priesthood (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1955 -- Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Paper), p. 88. Hans von Campenhausen, in analyzing the ministry of the original apostles, sees it as "plenipotentiary" (p. 26). Geddes MacGregor's book Corpus Christi is based on the thesis that Christ is the sole head of the church, and that if the

Furthermore, it suggests that, since Christ himself sought "not to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45), Christian ministry can do no other than to imitate the servant role taken on by Christ himself.[623]

Karl Barth builds a theology of service in the church on the foundation of Christ as the one who serves:

> It is as [Christ] serves that He rules. It is as the humiliated Son of God that He is the exalted Son of Man. Thus the obedience of his community corresponding to His rule can only be service, and the law which obtains in it...can only be the law of service. The community attains its true order as His body when its action is service. And its members, Christians, attain their true order when they serve.[624]

Barth's approach to ministerial order, throughout the Church Dogmatics, is communal rather than individualistic. Passages in which he speaks of individual offices are relatively rare; he prefers to view ministry as a collective responsibility belonging to the whole community. Barth describes ministry -- and indeed,

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doctrine of the church as Christ's body is not properly maintained, either of the two extremes of congregationalism or clericalism will result.

[623]T.F. Torrance, "The Ministry," in Ray S. Anderson, ed., Theological Foundations for Ministry (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979), p. 393. We have seen in Chapter One how the word "servant" (diakonos) is the characteristic New Testament term for ministry. On this theme, see also Schweizer, pp. 23ff., and J.K.S. Reid, The Biblical Doctrine of the Ministry, p. 3. Yet even though ministry ought to seek to imitate the pattern of Christ, this imitation does not extend to the gender of the individual; all ministries in the church are equally capable of being performed by men and women.

[624]Church Dogmatics IV/2, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), pp. 690-691. This theme of service, or Dienst, is a major theme in Barthian theology. For more on this subject, see Gordon S. Huffman, Jr., The Community As Dienst: A Study of the Ministry of the Church in the Theology of Karl Barth (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of St. Andrews, 1976).

all ecclesiology -- in thoroughly functional terms. The church, to him, is more an event than an institution. It is a living, organic reality, the body of Christ active in the world through the power of the Holy Spirit. For that reason, we will not find within the Church Dogmatics a discussion, say, of which biblical offices of ministry the modern church ought to retain, or of how broadly the church ought to extend the rite of ordination. These are matters of relative indifference to Barth, subservient to the community's overarching goal of responding faithfully and flexibly to Christ's call to service.

The Reformation has been called a rediscovery of "the christological centre of the church," and that is particularly characteristic of ministry of the word and sacrament in Reformed churches.[625] In the oft-quoted words of Barth, the church is "the earthly-historical form of the existence of Jesus Christ in this interim period."[626]

For the Reformers, where the gospel is, there Christ is; and where Christ is, there is the church. It is the imperative of the gospel that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, calls the church into being in the first place; and it is the dissemination of the gospel

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[625]Paul D.L. Avis, The Church in the Theology of the Reformers, p. 215.

[626]Church Dogmatics IV/1, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), p. 718 and elsewhere. In his earlier Epistle to the Romans, trans. Edwyn C. Hoskyns (London: Oxford, 1933), p. 36, Barth is even more blunt in his language, seeing the church as "no more than a crater formed by the explosion of a shell," the "shell" being the gospel. Elsewhere in that work, he modifies that dynamic image, describing the church as the setting in which "the lightning from heaven becomes a slow-burning, earth-made oven" (p. 332).

that is the church's primary task. Since word and sacrament are the most visible means by which the gospel is proclaimed, the ministry having stewardship over these gifts is central to the life and mission of the church.

This is not to declare that there are no other ministries; on the contrary, ministry of word and sacrament is but one ministry among many. Each Christian is given a gift, to use for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7). Yet it may also be said that, inasmuch as word and sacrament are the essentials of the church's life and the means by which Christ is held up to the world, ministry of word and sacrament has a highly distinctive role.

A potent symbol of this distinctive role for ministry of the word and sacrament is ordination. Although churches of the Reformed tradition frequently ordain other church leaders (such as elders and deacons), ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament symbolizes the solemn setting-apart of gifted and trained individuals to fulfill the functions peculiar to that office, proclamation and celebration. While ordination is not necessary to the fulfillment of those functions in any sort of instrumental sense, it does serve as a sign of their uniqueness and of their centrality to the life of the community.

Recognition of the high priesthood and headship of Christ implies a certain flexibility and openness in church order to the leading of the Spirit, which is the Triune God's active presence in

the church.[627] We have seen in Chapter One how the earliest church order, that of the Pauline churches, is charismatic in nature; Paul sees the Holy Spirit as constitutive of all ministries in the church. The same is true of the church's ministries today. Although the particular forms of ministry are certainly less fluid than in Paul's day, there is an equally strong realization that it is the Spirit of Christ who is behind all ministry.

The laying on of hands in ordination is especially significant in marking the presence of the Holy Spirit in ministry -- as we have seen in our consideration of the New Testament texts. Although it is problematic to view the laying on of hands as bestowing the Spirit in any instrumental sense, it is consistent with the broad understanding of ordination in the Reformed tradition to say that it is an act by which the community recognizes God's prior gift of the Spirit to the one ordained, and therefore also to the community which the new minister will

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[627]Barth shares this fluid conception of the work of the Holy Spirit in empowering the church's ministry: "There are also wholly individual, transitory and changing endowments of [the Holy Spirit]. There are those which cannot possibly be brought within the confines of institutional office. The hierarchy of these endowments...can never be rigid. Always and everywhere it is fluid, and necessarily remains so" -- Church Dogmatics IV/4, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969), p. 38. Barth goes on to say that the only possible criteria to apply in judging the authenticity of a person's claim to church office is "whether the one who serves in this or that office is a recipient of the charismata indispensable to his work, and...whether he is a recipient and bearer of the love which is above all spiritual gifts."

serve.[628]

Max Thurian, in Priesthood and Ministry: Ecumenical Research, makes a bold attempt to develop an ecumenical theology of ordination. Following Calvin (who, as we have seen, acknowledges in a passing reference that he is not averse to considering ordination a sacrament), Thurian ventures rather far in the direction of a sacramental understanding.[629]

Thurian includes an interesting excursus on the Greek word exousia, "authority." Thurian, who sees exousia as meaning also "power" and "freedom," cites the example of Jesus' healing of the paralytic (Matt. 9:6-8) as a case study for the gift of the Spirit in ordination.[630] The paralytic is healed by the power of Jesus, but he is not able to take up his bed and walk until he also claims the freedom Jesus has bestowed. By analogy, in God's act of

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[628]"The Church, says Robert Paul, "does not create a Minister by ordination, it simply recognizes him. 'You did not choose me,' said Jesus to his disciples, 'I chose you' (John 15:16)." -- Ministry, p. 154.

[629]To Calvin, the definition of a sacrament is something that "is instituted by God, and [has] God's promise" (Institutes, IV.19.20). By that definition, he does admit that ordination could be considered a sacrament (IV.14.20, IV.19.31), but elsewhere (IV.19.6) questions whether the laying on of hands should be practiced at all in the church, since the "grace" of the apostolic era "has ceased to be given." The truth is, Calvin is rather ambivalent about ordination (which he considers to be a practice that has fallen into serious decay) -- although he is not ambivalent at all about the continuing need for a ministerial function in the church. Thurian, of course, has himself ventured so far in the direction of a sacramental understanding of ordination that he has departed the Reformed tradition, becoming a Roman Catholic.

[630]Priesthood and Ministry: Ecumenical Research, trans. Paula Clifford (London: Mowbray, 1970), p. 161.

calling and ordaining to ministry, a certain power or authority is bestowed on the ordinand -- but a response on that person's part is still necessary, in order for the promised ministerial authority to be realized.

Ordination, in Thurian's view, has a singularly dynamic character:

> The spiritual power which constitutes the distinctive sign of the minister in the Church, his ministerial character, is not something at his disposal, a material mark, an injected fluid, a static treasure. It is a particular relation established by God with a believer whom he has chosen and ordained to be his ambassador within the universal priesthood of the Church. The ministerial character is a gift, but it remains in constant dialogue with God, a promise of renewal and revitalizing for the service of the Church and of men.[631]

Just as "the son of man came not to be served, but to serve" (Matt. 20:28, Mark 10:45), the Spirit of Christ continues to be a spirit of service, impressing on the church's ministry an attitude of servanthood.

According to the Pauline understanding of gifts of the Spirit in the church, says Hans Küng, there are two criteria by which the community can discern the Spirit of God from false spirits. The first is that the Holy Spirit will always impel the gifted person to affirm that Jesus Christ is Lord (1 Cor. 12:3); the second is...

> ...the element of service attached to the charism. The true charism is not simply a miracle; it is something in the service of the community, giving a sense of responsibility towards the community and the desire to edify and benefit it.[632]

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[631]Priesthood and Ministry: Ecumenical Research, p. 162.

[632]The Church, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (London: Search Press, 1968), p. 182.

Christ is the sole head of the church, and the one whom all its ministers serve; yet since this Lord comes himself as one who serves, the only indelible mark attaching to ordination is the mark of servanthood.[633]

2) Ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament is a means by which the marks of the church -- proclamation of the word and celebration of the sacraments -- may be seen more clearly in the life of the community.

A Reformed ministerial order must be based on the assumption that proclamation of the word and celebration of the sacraments are together the central mission of the church. Word and sacrament are the marks of the church; they are the marks of the church's ministry as well.[634] All ministerial order exists for the central purpose of handing word and sacrament on to the world.

This is true of all kinds of ministries, not only the ministry of word and sacrament as such. Elders and deacons likewise serve this central mission (although indirectly), as do those engaged in

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[633]"The Minister," says Robert Paul in Ministry, p. 42, "is the servant of the Church in the same sense as the Church is the servant of the world that Christ came to redeem; but neither the Minister nor the Church can fulfill the vocation to service unless they are first of all the servants of Jesus Christ." Later, Paul describes the role of ministers as similar to that of Jesus' disciples who distributed the loaves and fishes to the hungry multitude: "It became a miracle in their hands. It was his gift, not theirs; and as we go to the ministry of Jesus to seek the pattern for our own, we go in humility and in penitence" (p. 76).

[634] Some Reformed theologians, as we have seen, add "discipline" as a third mark of the church. Calvin himself does so in some of the early editions of the Institutes, but in the final edition of 1559 he speaks only of word and sacrament (IV.1.10.). I prefer to understand discipline as implicit in word and sacrament, especially in the adverbs of the classic formulation, "the word truly proclaimed and the sacraments rightly administered."

non-ordained ministries as teachers, administrators, trustees, and ordinary church members. All cooperate in fulfilling this mission.[635]

The same is true of the church's polity. The ways and means of the church's organization (including the ministry's organization) ought to be determined solely by the criterion of how much they contribute to the faithful and effective proclamation of the word and celebration of the sacraments. No single polity can ever be enshrined as the Reformed polity for all time; the church must ever be ready to adapt itself to new situations and circumstances.[636] The Reformed church is "always being reformed."

The popular understanding of ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has broadened considerably from the strict Reformation focus on word and sacrament. Indeed, the decision of the Task Force on the Theology and Practice of Ordination to recommend the term "minister of the gospel" (rather than "minister of the word and sacrament") in its 1992 report -- to encompass "a

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[635] As von Campenhausen says of the ministry of elders (and, by implication, of all ministries in the church), ministerial authority "is not unspiritual just so long as it remains obedient to the Spirit of Christ, and performs the service of the Gospel of Christ for which it was appointed. Only where the original evangelical relation is inverted, and the authority of the official as such is made absolute, is the primitive Christian concept of the Church abandoned..." (p. 80).

[636] T.F. Torrance aptly adapts Karl Barth's notion of the church's "upbuilding" to ministry when he describes ministry -- along with the Bible, the various charismata, and the sacraments -- as a temporary scaffolding built around the Body of Christ that will pass away at the parousia (Royal Priesthood, pp. 97-98). In this, he shares Barth's dynamic, mission-driven conception of the church.

multiplicity of activities" that are popularly collected under the term "ministry" -- is a conscious attempt to broaden the understanding of ordination beyond work in a particular congregation.[637]

Besides the traditional theological model of ministry as service of word and sacrament, two secular models tend to compete for attention in the late twentieth-century American Presbyterian church. One is the model of minister as therapist. The proliferation of specialized counseling ministries, from hospital chaplaincies to freelance pastoral counselors -- along with the remarkable growth of extra-seminary, inter-denominational training and certification programs for counselors (such as the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education and the American Association of Pastoral Counselors) -- has led to a marked increase in the number of ministers who are engaged in ministry outside the traditional parish, and apart from any regular participation in proclamation of the word or celebration of the sacraments. Even within parish ministry, the therapeutic model is exercising increasing dominance, as therapeutically-trained ministers encounter parishioners who have had extensive experience seeking personal growth through self-help groups, and who look to their church to provide individual assistance in their journeys toward "self-actualization."

The second non-traditional model is that of the minister as

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[637] A Proposal For Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), pp. 39ff. While this recommendation is laudable in its goal of inclusiveness, it perhaps goes too far, so broadening the definition of ordained ministry that the notion of "set-apart" ministry is lost.

manager. We have already traced the roots of this model to H. Richard Niebuhr's concept of the "pastoral director" in The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry.[638] Although Niebuhr warns in his book against a particular exaggeration of the pastoral director that he dubs the "big operator," the seeds of this aberration are in fact already present in the model itself.[639] Minister-managers see themselves as chief executive officers of non-profit community service organizations; they operate not out of a "study" but out of an "office," and their chief preoccupation is with techniques of motivation and management.[640]

It is not difficult to see that these two specialized

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[638]The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (New York: Harper, 1956), pp. 79ff.

[639]The nature of the pastoral director's authority, Niebuhr says, is not institutional (as with a Roman Catholic priest's), and not scriptural (as with a Reformation preacher's), but is "communal authority" -- The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry, p. 89. It arises from the pastoral director's knowledge of the community, and the community's continued approbation of the pastoral director's work. The pastoral director, admits Niebuhr -- in good American populist fashion -- is "the democratic pastoral administrator, that is to say, a man charged with the responsibility and given the authority to hold in balance, to invigorate and to maintain communication among a host of activities and their responsible leaders, all directed toward a common end" (pp. 90-91). Niebuhr's model is unabashedly secular, borrowing more from the insights of American political theory and management science than from scripture or the traditions of the church.

[640]Robert W. Henderson, in "The Ministry of the Word and Sacrament," an essay in the preliminary study book of the Task Force on the Theology and Practice of Ordination, Ordination: Past, Present, Future, ed. Jack Rogers and Deborah Flemister Mullen (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing House, 1990), p. 16, asks the provocative question, "Are Presbyterians sufficiently committed to their personal discipleship and corporate ministry to allow the ministers of Word and sacrament among them to be leaders in the faith, without at the same time casting them as the C.E.O. of a corporation?"

conceptions of ministry are in a certain tension or competition with each other. On the level of the local church, ministers who are influenced by both models may find themselves at cross-purposes: one moment trying to convey an impression of caring and warmth from the pulpit or in the counseling session, and the next, endeavoring to shift roles entirely into the role of corporate manager. This somewhat schizophrenic understanding of ministry has led to a certain fragmentation of the pastoral role -- not to mention misunderstanding and even alienation on the part of church members. If the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) can recover its primary understanding of ministry as service of word and sacrament, and can come to see functions such as therapy and management as subsidiary to this central purpose of the ministry, much painful conflict in the church may be avoided.

Another consequence of the centrality of word and sacrament is the Reformed principle of parity of ministries. Concisely put, this means that there is no higher ministry than the ministry of word and sacrament. Just as there is "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all" (Eph. 4:5), so there is only one ministry. There can and indeed should be ministries of administrative oversight, but this oversight does not give the overseeing minister higher status; there is a fundamental equality of ordained ministries. Parity of ministries also means that those who actually proclaim the word and celebrate the sacraments are not higher in status than those who support these tasks in other ways. Word and sacrament are gifts of God, not human achievements, and

therefore do not bestow upon those who serve them a status higher than those who serve God in other ways.[641]

Ministry of word and sacrament is also a means by which the church's apostolicity -- one of the classical (Nicene) marks of the church -- becomes more evident in Christian community life. Although ministry of the word and sacrament may also be seen in relation to the other classical marks of the church -- unity, holiness and catholicity -- ministry is particularly associated with apostolicity (we have seen in Chapter Four how this was an especially prevalent theme in the Scottish reformation).[642] In the Reformed tradition, apostolicity is centered in the faithful transmission of the kerygma of the apostles.[643]

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[641]As Barth says, leadership in the church proceeds "not in the form of a hierarchy, only in the form of service in special offices, which neither know of precedence among themselves, nor signify a precedence in their holders over the community members not in office, because in principle there is no other mediator, because the mediators have found their fulfillment in the Mediator of the New Testament and can never again acquire an independent significance" -- Church Dogmatics I/2, trans. G.T. Thomson and Harold Knight (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), p. 104.

[642]Inasmuch as ministry of the word and sacrament serves to strengthen the bonds of fellowship among Christians, the church becomes more unified. Inasmuch as ministry is a means by which the Holy Spirit is active in the community, the church becomes more holy. Inasmuch as the fruits of ministry are ecumenically recognizable by other parts of the body, the church becomes more catholic.

[643]Some contemporary Roman Catholics are even expressing this classically Reformed understanding. One is Edward Schillebeeckx, who in The Church With a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1990), pp. 91-92, maintains that "a community without a good, matter-of-fact pastoral institutionalization of its ministry (a flexible development of it in changed circumstances) runs the risk of losing for good the apostolicity and thus ultimately the Christian character of its origin, inspiration and orientation -- and in the

This kerygmatic understanding of church's apostolicity is an important theme in the theology of Karl Barth. The community of the church exists, in Barth's view, for the sole purpose of being the body of Christ at work in the world. Apostolic succession consists not in positioning oneself at the end of an unbroken line of ordinations stretching back to the apostles, but in demonstrating the apostolic ideal of servanthood:

> [The apostles] are not in any sense lords of the community, nor do they play any autonomous role in relation to it. Jesus Christ makes use of them. Their authority, power and mission consists in the fact that he does this. In this they are the rock on which he builds his church....Without him they would be only a pile of sand. And it is not they who build His community but He who builds it as He makes use of them. They are only His servants....In this matter there is only one true succession, and even on the part of the Church it is the succession of service....If the Church learns and exercises its ministerium in this school [of the apostles], then it will certainly be kept from corrupting and transforming it into a dominium.[644]

3) Ordination to ministry of the word and sacraments is to function, rather than office.

In the strictest sense of the word "office," it is not correct to speak of Reformed ministerial office at all -- for an office is something held by an individual as a right.[645] One "holds" or

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last resort its own identity. Ministry is connected with a special concern for the preservation of the Christian identity of the community in constantly changing circumstances."

[644]Church Dogmatics IV/1, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), pp. 718-720. See also Church Dogmatics I/1, trans. G.T. Thomson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1936), p. 109.

[645]The English word "office" is in fact used in a variety of overlapping senses. To some, it may mean little more than "function"; to others, a position held by persons in an organization while they are actively performing a function; to

"possesses" an office. Reformed ministry, however, is a task, an activity, to which an individual has the challenge and privilege of being called -- it is never something that can be "held" by that individual.[646] An individual's call to ministry coincides with certain spiritual gifts given by the Holy Spirit in order that the particular ministerial function may be fulfilled (Eph. 4:7-16). Ordination bestows no "indelible mark," as the traditional Roman Catholic view has it, but rather sets a person apart for the proper fulfillment of a particular function in Christ's church.[647]

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still others, a permanent position established by an organization's constitution and assigned, through an act of credentialing, to particular individuals. There is also a sense in which "office" may mean the collection of duties assigned to a person holding a particular position -- as in "fulfilling the office of ministry." While recognizing that, at the more functional end of this continuum of meaning, the word "office" is well within the Reformed understanding of ministry, I am suggesting that a general avoidance of the term may help prevent misunderstanding, as well as reducing the further undermining of the servant model of ministry.

[646] Calvin does speak of Reformed ministerial "office" in the Institutes, but it is quite clear from the context that by this word he does not consider ministry to be something "held" by an individual (see IV.III.4-9). For consideration of the biblical evidence for ministry as function rather than office, se J.K.S. Reid, The Biblical Doctrine of the Ministry, p. 7; Anthony T. Hanson, The Pioneer Ministry, pp. 57, 97; and Bruce M. Metzger, "Paul's Vision of the Church," p. 56.

[647] The Second Vatican Council has modified the "indelible mark" view somewhat, emphasizing the priest's kinship and fellowship with the laity -- although it does not explicitly repudiate it. See "Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests," in Walter M. Abbott, ed., The Documents of Vatican II (New York: Guild Press, 1966), pp. 536ff. In Theology, Church and Ministry (New York: Crossroad, 1986), pp. 177-178, John MacQuarrie, writing from the Anglican point of view, makes a creative attempt to redeem the indelible-mark doctrine through a dynamic interpretation of ministerial "character" (as in character indelibilis). MacQuarrie defines the "sacramental dimension" of ordination as "God's commitment to his ministers, his promise of a grace and charism to sustain them in their impossible vocation." This promise is not realized only

Ordination is a recognition of the gift of the Holy Spirit, imparted to the individual for the fulfillment of that function. There is no special status that attaches to the ordinand after he or she has ceased to perform that function.

A consequence of the functional understanding of ordination, as Daniel Jenkins points out, is that there is little or no foundation for a distinction between clergy and laity:

> The popular distinction between ministers and laymen is obviously useful on the level of sociological description and is a convenient way of referring to differences of function but the nomenclature is misleading and the distinction is always in danger of being pressed too hard. There are, ultimately, no different orders of believers, even though there are different callings. All believers belong to the laos, the community of the people of God, and all have gifts appropriate to their calling.[648]

There are particular problems with the term "clergy," which is increasingly coming into common usage in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The word "clergy" occurs nowhere in the Bible, and the only places it occurs in the church's Book of Confessions are derogatory references to Roman priests. The word is derived from the Greek word kleros ("share" or "portion"), which eventually became the English word "clerk." Although it may not sound, on the face of it, as though a word for "clerk" is meant to convey any exalted privilege, in the centuries-old ecclesiastical context in which reading and writing were uncommon skills, the "clerics" were

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once, at the moment of the laying on of hands, but is rather the beginning of a dynamic relationship: "though priests sin like other human beings, God keeps recalling them to their vocation, electing them again and again to be leaders among his people."

[648]The Protestant Ministry, p. 35.

able to effectively monopolize access to scripture -- not to mention (in the smaller towns) legal documents, public proclamations, and indeed all forms of written communication.

In The Protestant Era, Paul Tillich argues for a radical "laicism":

> The Protestant principle overcomes the gap between the sacred and the secular spheres, between priesthood and laity. Protestantism demands a radical laicism. There are in Protestantism only laymen; the minister is a layman with a special function within the congregation; and, in addition to possessing certain personal requisites, he is qualified for the fulfillment of this function by a carefully regulated professional training. He is a nonlayman solely by virtue of his training.[649]

Faithfulness to the spirit of the Reformation -- at whose heart is the conviction that access to God's word belongs to all people -- may call for an intentional effort, on the part of present-day Reformed Christians, to work toward just this sort of "radical laicism" -- not to deny the necessity of ordination, but to scrupulously avoid its misuse as a vehicle for constructing barriers of status or prestige between one part of the body of Christ and another. On the practical level, one way to advance the Reformed functional understanding of ordination is to avoid using the term "clergy."[650]

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[649]The Protestant Era, trans. James Luther Adams (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948, p. 174.

[650]This is not to say that the term may not have some usefulness, on the practical level, in ecumenical and interfaith discussions; it is, after all, the only word in the English language that can accurately be used to describe officeholders as diverse as ministers, priests, Salvation Army officers, Christian Science practitioners, rabbis and imams. Yet for in-house discussions within the Presbyterian church, the word is best avoided in favor of the traditional term, "minister." Much has

A thoroughgoing functional understanding of ordination such as the one I am advancing raises certain questions with regard to the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Paper number 111, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry.[651] There has been no shortage of discussion of this document which is such an important milestone in the ecumenical movement, and for that reason it is not my intention here to analyze the "Ministry" portion of the document in a comprehensive way; but it is appropriate at this juncture to add a few comments about the threefold pattern of ministry.

In Chapter Two we charted the rise of the threefold pattern, particularly over the first three centuries of the church's life. We observed there how the pattern of bishop, presbyter and deacon evolved only gradually, beginning with the charismatic, corporate ministerial order of the Pauline churches and augmented by the contributions of other early church orders.[652] Historically, the threefold pattern can be attributed as much to the growing centralization of the church's administrative functions -- a trend which accelerated after the church achieved recognition by the

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been made in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in recent years of the importance of language that is inclusive of all people; yet it just may be that avoidance of the term "clergy" is the most important form of "inclusive language" of all -- for, by not relegating the non-ordained to an implicitly lower status, it upholds the priesthood of all believers and is thereby inclusive of the whole people of God.

[651](Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

[652]Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry acknowledges that ministry appears in a diversity of forms in the New Testament, and that therefore no single pattern of ministry may be discovered in the biblical material "which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry" (19).

Emperor Constantine as the state religion of the Roman Empire -- as it can to a developing theological or biblical understanding.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry may be saluted by the Reformed tradition for beginning its understanding of ministry with the ministry of the whole people of God, as realized in the sacrament of baptism.[653] It demonstrates, however, something of an official conception of ministry at times. This is seen in BEM's desire to make ordained leaders a visible embodiment of the church's unity:

> In order to fulfil its mission, the church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity. The ministry of such persons, who since very early times have been ordained, is constitutive for the life and witness of the church.[654]

The theme of ministry as diakonia is notably present in Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, as is a functional description of ministers' responsibilities that is very similar to the Reformed marks of word, sacrament and discipline:

> The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in

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[653]Sections 1, 3 and 5.

[654]Section 8. In this passage, the ministry is seen as belonging to the esse, rather than the bene esse, of the church. BEM does provide something of an internal corrective, however, in asserting that the "personal, collegial and communal" aspects of ministry must always be kept in balance (III.B. 26, text and commentary). The "personal, collegial and communal" triad may be seen as a recasting of the recommendation by the First World Conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne in 1927 that future ecumenical consensus on ministry must necessarily include "episcopal, presbyteral and congregational" elements.

its worship, its mission and its caring ministry.[655]

This functional understanding is further developed in the document's assertion that "the authority of the ordained person is not to be understood as the possession of the ordained person but as a gift [which] is exercised with the cooperation of the whole community."[656]

Another way in which BEM presents a somewhat official view of ministry is in its meticulously qualified endorsement of the threefold pattern:

> Although there is no single New Testament pattern, although the Spirit has many times led the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs, and although other forms of the ordained ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it....In the fulfilment of their mission and service the churches need people who in different ways express and perform the tasks of the ordained ministry in its diaconal, presbyteral and episcopal aspects and functions.[657]

The above paragraph begins as something of an official statement of ministry, and becomes, by the end, a functional statement. It is less than clear whether BEM is calling for the literal establishment of offices called "bishop," "presbyter" and "deacon," or whether these names in fact refer to functions, which

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[655]Diakonia is present in section 1, "to be set apart means to be consecrated to service." The passage on word and sacrament quoted above is from section 13.

[656]Section 15.

[657]Section 22.

may be realized through a variety of official forms.[658] Elsewhere, BEM defines these offices so broadly that they can rather easily fit into the Reformed understanding -- as long as it is understood that the Reformed minister is in pastoral-liturgical functioning closer to the ancient office of bishop than to the office of presbyter.[659]

Our response to BEM must be similar to our response, in the previous chapter, to the Churches in Covenant Communion document of the Consultation on Church Union. Through artful use of language, BEM presents a promising beginning for dialogue and even tentative moves toward organic union, but the ambiguity of its language is a curse as well as a blessing. Representatives of diverse traditions within Christianity may be led by BEM to read more consensus into the document's endorsement by another tradition than is actually there.

4) Ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament is but one expression of the universal servanthood of all believers, and is therefore linked to baptism.

I have chosen to speak of the "servanthood" of all believers rather than Luther's ideal of the priesthood of all believers, because the notion of priesthood is fraught with difficulty for

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[658]BEM, in fact, acknowledges (24) that the threefold pattern as lived out in the churches "stands evidently in need of reform," and implies that the threefold pattern is not embodied by any single church in all purity.

[659]Section 29. Also, there is the reassurance that "the reality and function of the episcopal ministry have been preserved in many of these [non-episcopal] churches, with or without the title 'bishop'" (37).

Reformed Christians (given our history of rejection of the Roman theology of human priestly mediation). Not only that, one of Luther's principal uses of the phrase is to broaden the priestly prerogative of pronouncing absolution, that it may belong to all Christians. The act of assuring a Christian brother or sister of the reality of God's forgiveness is, to Luther, a form of mutual servanthood.

Ministry is a matter for the whole church, not solely for those who perform designated ministerial tasks. As Murdo Macdonald points out in The Call to Communicate,

> One of our problems is the persistent misunderstanding of the classical Reformed doctrine of "the priesthood of all believers." In the past we have interpreted this radical doctrine almost exclusively in individualistic terms. In the New Testament we find the word "priesthood" is not used with reference either to individuals or to a specialized group within the Church. It is used to designate the priesthood of Christ the King and Head of the Church, and again to designate the priestly function of the whole people of God, the Church which is his body. The Reformers stressed that all Christians had been called and constituted as a sacrificing priesthood, and therefore the gifts of the ministry are given and the task of the ministry is committed not to individuals but to the Church.[660]

Ministerial authority according to the Reformed tradition derives ultimately from God, but aspects of it are entrusted to individuals by the whole church. We have seen how this is the pattern of the Pauline church, and also the pattern endorsed by Calvin, who laid it down as a principle that "spiritual power...be administered not at the discretion of one man, but by a legitimate

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[660]Murdo Ewen Macdonald, The Call to Communicate (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1975), p. 16.

assembly."[661] When, in the Presbyterian Church, a candidate for ordination kneels and is visually swallowed up by the crowd of those who have come forward for the laying on of hands, it is a potent symbol of the involvement of the whole church in the new ministry. As a candidate for baptism is -- literally or figuratively -- swallowed up by the waters and thereby rendered dead to sin and alive to righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24), so likewise a candidate for ordination is enfolded in the midst of God's loving people, and challenged to put sinful self to death for the sake of the gospel.

This also means that, apart from the functions of preaching and celebrating the sacraments -- which, by virtue of educational credentials or the principles of good order are entrusted to certain individuals -- ministry is shared by the whole church. Each Christian is called to minister to others, to support others, to upbuild others through fellowship. Ministry is servanthood, and servanthood is the task of all who follow Christ.

For a particular church to proclaim on its signboard "Ministers: All Our Members," as some American Presbyterian churches do, is to make a statement that is correct according to one level of meaning, but problematic according to another. On one

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[661] "Authority in the primitive church, then, did not reside in official ministers but in the church as a whole, all of whose members felt themselves under the authority of Christ....If anybody appears bearing official authority, this is authority delegated to him by the church, and this possibility of delegation no doubt accounts for the beginning of the official ministry." -- R.P.C. Hanson, Christian Priesthood Examined, p. 20. See also Calvin, Institutes IV.11.5.

level, the phrase bears witness to the distinctive Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and also declares the church's determination to encourage its members to active engagement with the needs and hurts of the world. Yet on another level, the phrase may serve to minimize the truly distinctive, set-apart character of ministry of the word and sacrament -- and may, in fact, be a contributing factor to the current confusion about the nature of ordained ministry. The fact that ministry in the generic sense is common to all baptized Christians does not obviate the need for distinctive ordained ministries.[662]

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) theologian Ronald E. Osborn puts the problem succinctly:

> The current tendency to speak of all Christians as ministers blurs a clear distinction in biblical thought. We all share in the common calling to servanthood, and each has his own responsibility within the corporate ministry of helpfulness. All are servants (slaves) of Jesus Christ. But we do no honor to the "lay apostolate" by dubbing every sincere Christian with the titles of the public servant. Every citizen is not a magistrate, every soldier is not an officer, every musician is not a conductor, and every servant is not a minister -- although every minister should be a servant.[663]

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[662]Robert Paul, in Ministry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), critiques the "theology of the laity" movement of Hendrik Kraemer and others, for so strongly affirming the ministry of the laity as to make a distinctive ordained ministry almost redundant, despite ample biblical precedent to the contrary: "To affirm that the members of the church have their own ministry does not do away with the particular ministers who are called by God to prepare for their task. It is not a question of one being more important than the other, but of both belonging to the church" (p. 30).

[663]In Christ's Place: Christian Ministry in Today's World (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1967), p. 69. Osborn goes on to observe that "the two most violently egalitarian political revolutions of modern times produced an officiary addressed as Citizen or Comrade" (p. 70).

Ordination is not of course a sacrament in the Presbyterian church, but it shares in the sacramental by virtue of the fact that it is irrevocably linked to the sacrament of baptism.[664] Baptism itself may be seen as the universal ordination of all Christian believers, an ordination to be the body of Christ and to do the work of Christ in the world.[665] Ordination is, in this understanding, but a pale shadow compared to the powerful significance of baptism.[666]

This is similar to the view of Luther, who likewise sees

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[664]Calvin, as we have seen, does not object to ordination being termed a sacrament, although he observes, "I do not include it among the ordinary sacraments." -- Institutes IV.14.20.

[665]Murdo MacDonald, in The Call to Communicate, p. 17, notes that some are questioning whether ordination is necessary at all: "The view which regards baptism as the only ordination has gained wide popularity. Put bluntly it maintains that if all Christians are ordained in baptism a second ordination makes no sense. Professional ministers will be required, but even they should receive no further ordination. All we need is to authorise them to carry out certain functions..."

[666]According to Barth, a newly baptized Christian "is now personally co-responsible for the execution of the missionary command which constitutes the community....This renders superfluous and indeed forbids the consecration, ordination or dedication which customarily relates to a specific form of this mission, as though it were the affair of an ecclesiastical hierarchy. According to the provisions of good ecclesiastical order, and in explication of the marching orders given to individuals in detail, pastors, elders, priests, deacons, deaconesses, bishops and even the pope as servus servorum Dei may be solemnly (but not too solemnly) assigned to their special place and missionary activity in the framework of the mission of the community. But all those baptised as Christians are eo ipso consecrated, ordained and dedicated to the mission of the Church." -- Church Dogmatics IV/4, pp. 200-201. Elsewhere, Barth writes, "When the promise is heard by men, inwardly and outwardly these men are together ordained to be the community sent out as a witness in the world and to the world." -- Church Dogmatics IV/1, trans. G.W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), p. 152.

ordination as founded on baptism:

> The priestly office....is the common property of all Christians. However, we deal with a different matter when we speak of those who have an office in the Christian Church, such as minister, preacher, pastor, or curate. These are not priests in the same sense that scripture commonly speaks of priests. They became priests when they received their office, in fact, when they were baptized. Hence they are not priests because of their calling or office....Such people are to be chosen by the Church only for the sake of the office. They are to be separated from the common mass of Christians in the same way as in secular government, where certain people of the citizenry or municipality are chosen and appointed as officials. One does not become a citizen by being elected burgomaster or judge, but one is elected to the office because one already possesses citizenship and is a member of the citizenry.[667]

The Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches reaffirmed this understanding of baptism as the basis of the universal ministry of all Christians in 1945:

> We must understand anew the implications of the fact that we are all baptized, that, as Christ came to minister, so must all Christians become ministers of his saving purpose according to the particular gift the Spirit which each has received, as messengers of the hope revealed in Christ.[668]

Baptism is the most ecumenically recognizable of all rites of the church. The universality of baptism became established

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[667]"Commentary on Psalm 110, 1539," trans. H. Richard Klann, in Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1956), p. 331.

[668]World Council of Churches Second Assembly, The Evanston Report (Evanston, Ill.: 1945), p. 162. Some theologians, notably Barth, have questioned whether infant baptism, containing as it does no element of response on the part of the individual being baptized, can sustain the weight of this interpretation. In The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism, trans. Ernest A. Payne (London: SCM, 1948), p. 47, Barth insists that infant baptism requires that the child one day make a further step of commitment to Jesus Christ, such as confirmation: "Infant baptism calls aloud for such a completion and supplementing."

centuries ago in the midst of the Donatist controversy, as the church determined that baptism with water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is efficacious, no matter how corrupt or improperly ordained the officiant may be. To this day, baptism is the only rite that is readily transferable from one communion to another; the Roman Catholic Church, for example, will not ordinarily re-baptize a person who has received the sacrament in a Protestant church.[669] Yet it is ironic that ordination, which is so strongly linked to baptism, is the least widely-recognized of all the rites of the church, and the thorniest obstacle to the organic union of churches.

In a 1961 pamphlet written for the World Council of Churches, the Reformed theologian Lukas Vischer clearly identifies baptism with a call to service, to which each member responds according to gifts which the Holy Spirit has bestowed:

> To be baptized means to live in and for the Church which is the body of Christ. To be incorporated into the body of Christ means that we are no longer individuals, but members of his Church. And as members of the Church we are called to a life of worship, prayer and service for each other. Each member is directly connected with the Head. But each member also has to fulfill his special function in the body, and thus contributes, in his particular place, to the building-up and growth of the body.
>
> To be baptized means to live in and for the world.... through baptism we are both withdrawn from the world and sent out into the world. We are placed where our service is required. Baptism is a sign of warning against all self-centredness and self-sufficiency of the Church. To

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[669]An exception, of course, is found in certain anabaptist churches who do not recognize infant baptism, and who insist that new members who were baptized as infants receive "believers' baptism" by immersion.

> be baptized means that we are no longer preoccupied with ourselves. We are sent out into the world, which God loved so much that he gave his only son for its sake.[670]

This linkage of ordination and baptism suggests that the church would do well to emphasize God's call to ministry as operative in all tasks to be performed in the church, not merely the ministry of word and sacrament. This has rarely been the case, however, in the American Presbyterian church; "call" language is commonly used with regard to ministers, but only rarely with regard to deacons and elders. In practice, the church tends to query ministerial candidates about their inner sense of God's call, but rarely raises such a question with candidates for the eldership or the diaconate. With elders and deacons, the examination tends to focus on the outer call -- on the church's impression that the candidate would be right for the job. The candidacy process for ministry of word and sacrament is usually initiated by the candidates themselves, as they report to the church their inner experience of God's call; in the case of the diaconate and the eldership, on the other hand, candidates are typically approached first by a nominating committee, that may raise with them for the first time the possibility of an inner call to ordained service.[671]

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[670]Ye Are Baptized (Geneva: World Council of Churches Department of the Laity, 1961), p. 46. Similar thoughts are expressed in several books on the ministry of the laity which were published at about the same time: Hendrik Kraemer, A Theology of the Laity (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1958); Hans-Ruedi Weber, The Militant Ministry: People and Pastors of the Early Church and Today (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963); and J.C. Hoekendijk, The Church Inside Out (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964).

[671]This anomaly is discussed in the 1992 Theology and Practice of Ordination report, p. 95.

5) Ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament is initiation to particular servanthood for the one ordained.

It may seem terribly commonplace to mention that ordination to ministry of the word and sacrament is ordination to service, but in fact this is a point that the church and its ministers have tended to honor in word but not in deed (and therefore always to the detriment of the gospel). To speak of ministers as "servants of the church" or "servants of Jesus Christ" excites no more agitation in the contemporary mind than to identify government officials as "public servants." Yet this identification of ministry with servanthood is one of the most radical constructs of the Christian faith, one which is a true skandalon or stumbling-block when it is truly apprehended.

The Anglican theologian John MacQuarrie notes that, although identifying ministry with service may seem to be belaboring the obvious, that is not the case:

> To say this might seem at first glance a mere tautology, for is not all ministry service and is not that simply what the word "ministry" means? The Greek word used for ministry in the New Testament is diakonia, "service." But the tautology has to be uttered, because one of the most unfortunate effects of the dominance of sociological factors over theological factors in Christian ministry has been the obscuring of the servant function, especially in ages of clericalism. To be sure, one could never get away from the linguistic fact that ministry means service, and the Pope has for long had as one of his titles, "Servant of the servants of God." But there have been many times in history when the application of this title must have seemed ironical in the extreme.[672]

Küng explains how the New Testament studiously avoids any contemporary Greek terms for civil or religious office when

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[672]Theology, Church and Ministry, p. 159.

speaking of the ministries of the church.[673] This, he suggests, is because the secular terms all express the relationship between rulers and ruled, and this relationship is precisely the meaning the writers of the New Testament wish to avoid.[674]

Once the New Testament church had considered and abandoned the available leadership-words, Küng goes on to say,

> There remained nothing else but to develop a new word. The word that was chosen was an unbiblical one, current neither in the Jewish nor the Hellenistic environment in this sense -- indeed a fundamentally unreligious word. The particular place and function of the individual in the community was comprehensively described with a word which carried no overtones of authority, officialdom, rule, dignity or power: the word diakonia, service.[675]

Other models are available to the writers of the New Testament, but they choose neither "ruler, "rabbi," "scribe" nor "priest" to depict the nature of leadership in the new community. "I am among you as one who serves," Jesus says (Lk. 22:27b). The New Testament writers take him at his word.

As the missionary theologian D.T. Niles points out, this conception of ministry as servanthood is difficult for the modern

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[673]The Church, p. 388.

[674]Words the New Testament avoids include arche (priest), time (the honor or respectability due a civil official), telos the all-encompassing power of office) and leitourgia (the civil or religious service of a leader). These words, Küng says, would all have been well-known to the authors of the various New Testament books, and their omission indicates that the early Christian community intentionally sought to differentiate its ministry from the secular idea of official leadership, which emphasized power and rule over others. The word hierarchia (from which our word "hierarchy" comes) does not appear in the New Testament at all, and also was not at all common in first-century secular usage; it did not actually come into currency until centuries later.

[675]The Church, p. 389.

mind to accept. We do not know firsthand the institution of slavery that was so familiar in the first century. Our churches are not filled, as were those of the first century, with slaves, household servants and others who knew firsthand how infinitely better was servitude to a generous master than to a cruel and capricious one:

> Is it not because we have so little emotional understanding of what it means to be a slave that we also find it so difficult to understand what the Scriptures tell us about the wonder of God's grace? It is only a slave who knows that he is a slave who can also know the unaccountable joy of being the slave of a gracious master. Is it any surprise that the contemporaries of that first Christian community were puzzled by this Christian joy at having a master, a master who could demand of them even death in his service, and yet whom in the hour of death they could salute with hymns of joy?[676]

As may well be expected of any commitment as radical as the servant way of Christ, there are certain obstacles to servant ministry that perpetually arise.

The first is a tendency to confuse service with servility. Ministry in the Reformed understanding is indeed service of the word, but because it is the service of Christ, it does not necessarily mean self-abasement. There may be some ministers who so strongly identify with the servant role that they consider themselves at the beck and call of their congregations. Ministers, however, do not take orders from the ones they serve, but only from Christ. Neither do the people blindly follow their ministers; to the extent that the people follow, they do so only because they

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[676]The Preacher's Calling to Be Servant (London: Lutterworth, 1959), p. 49.

perceive, in their ministers' words and deeds, echoes of the authentic words and deeds of Christ.

D.T. Niles draws this same distinction between serving at the bidding of those we serve, and serving at the bidding of Jesus Christ, as he relates the story of a visit he made to a missionary friend, whose reception at the hands of the local inhabitants had been less than warm. His friend said, "Niles, I am not wanted here but I know I am needed, and so here I mean to stay." Niles continues,

> I understood, then, what it really meant to be a servant "through Jesus." The missionary was not servant to do what the local church leaders demanded of him simply because they demanded it. He had to do what he was convinced Christ demanded of him, because Christ was his Master....But this was also true, that whether his service was accepted or not, was acceptable or not, he could not quit. "Servant" was what he had been appointed to be, and their servant he had to remain. Here is the essential nature of the preacher's calling -- that we are preachers not because God has called us to be preachers but because God has called us to be servants.[677]

A second obstacle to servant ministry is sacerdotalism, which for our purposes can be defined as the belief that the ordained are somehow more holy or more intrinsically valuable to the life of the community than other Christians. Although it is unlikely that many Protestants would fall into the trap of seeing ministers as essential to salvation (in the same sense that traditional Roman Catholics see the priest's re-enactment of Christ's sacrifice in the mass as uniquely salvific), there is a sense in which some ministers may so egotistically interject their personalities into

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[677]The Preacher's Calling To Be Servant, pp. 43-44.

their ministries that they come to believe they are personally indispensable.

Niles tells a story of one such minister whom he knew in Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon):

> A young missionary who came to work in the church in Ceylon left us and returned to his home because he felt compelled to do things that he did not want to do. His only task, he said, was to preach the Gospel. He was certainly an effective preacher, but his congregation did not need a benefactor of God's word but a servant. Even with respect to the sacraments, how often they are made the mark of the priest, distinguishing him from his people, instead of being the sign of the priesthood of the whole people of God! Servanthood: that, then, is the crux of the matter; and the preacher who is not a servant becomes a benefactor.[678]

In the field of medicine, one of the most glamorous and highly-paid positions is that of the expert surgeon, who wins the world's acclaim by performing risky, experimental operations. While the achievements of such a surgeon in saving individual lives are not to be belittled, the fact remains that more lives are saved each day by public-health nurses, who, laboring in squalid conditions in third-world slums, insure that water supplies are healthy and that routine sanitation procedures are followed. The obstacle of sacerdotalism may lead some ministers to aspire to such glory as is showered upon the famous surgeon, neglecting Christ's call to deliver the essentials of the gospel to the places where they are most desperately needed.

Calvin, in the Institutes, relates a story of St. Bernard, who challenges the corrupt leadership of Pope Eugenius with these

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[678]The Preacher's Calling To Be Servant, p. 55.

words:

> You have been made a superior. For what? Not to domineer, I suppose. Therefore, highly as we think of ourselves, let us remember that a ministry has been laid upon us, not a lordship given. Learn that you need a hoe, not a scepter, to do the prophet's work.[679]

A third obstacle is unhealthy professionalism or clericalism. While there is a certain archaic sense in which the very nature of ministry can be seen as "professional" -- grounded in the profession of faith in Christ as Lord -- there is also a category of unhealthy professionalism in which ministry is seen no longer as a vocation but merely a job, a means of earning one's living. This temptation away from servant ministry is particularly powerful in upwardly mobile American culture.

It is becoming clear that ministry, which once enjoyed a rather exalted position in American society, has slipped significantly in prestige in recent decades. Ministers were once equated with physicians, lawyers and academics as one of the honored professions, but now -- to the extent that ministers are seen as professionals at all -- they are regarded as a sort of poor relation. While this removal of ministry from the pedestal on which the culture had hitherto placed it may not be a bad thing in and of itself, some ministers have responded by clinging ever more tightly to their professional prerogatives.

This is not beneficial for either society or the minister, as Paul Hanson points out:

Ministers are not immune, being human after all, to the

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[679]Institutes, IV.11.11.

> status consciousness and accompanying materialism that has swept over the professional world as a whole. How can ministers maintain their self-respect among successful lawyers, climbing business executives, and wealthy medical doctors if they lag behind on the ladder of progress as ones called "not to be served but to serve?"....Our society is in a brittle state precisely because the grace of serving others has been so severely defined out of the modern world view. The biblical language may have an archaic ring, and hence may be in need of reformulation, but in this context we can still use it in describing a society that is being assailed by a host of false gods and in which many have attached their hearts to these gods.[680]

Clericalism has become the order of the day in many Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presbyteries. With the post-Second World War proliferation of specialized ministries, some urban presbyteries have become seriously overbalanced with regard to the ratio of ministers' votes to elders' votes.[681] Yet even if a constitutional way is found to balance the numbers, the rampant professionalism known as clericalism may still lead to ministers having a disproportionately important role in ecclesiastical decision-making. Even if society at large is not so willing as it once was to hand ministers disproportionate personal authority, it continues to be the case that some segments of the church are eager to do so. A truly committed servant leader will resist every temptation to accept that offer.

Yet, as Robert Paul points out, it is wrong to respond to the

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[680]Paul D. Hanson, "The Servant Dimension of Pastoral Ministry in Biblical Perspective," in The Pastor As Servant, ed. Earl D. Shelp and Ronald H. Sunderland (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1986), p. 16.

[681]A Proposal For Considering the Theology and Practice of Ordination, pp. 80-81.

growth of clericalism by subsuming the distinctive role of the ministry under an all-encompassing theology of the laity:

> Only a Christian community with an understanding of ministry at its center can keep Christians true to their Lord and faithful to their mission. The answer to clericalism is not anticlericalism or laicism but ministry.[682]

Authority exercised in the way of Christ is of a different order than the world's ordinary expectations of authority-figures. In the words of John R.W. Stott,

> The authority by which the Christian leader leads is not power but love, not force but example, not coercion but reasoned persuasion. Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve.[683]

A fourth obstacle to servant ministry is institutionalism. In this mistaken understanding, the church is seen as serving the ministry, rather than the other way around. Daniel Jenkins warns of this tendency:

> No matter what their official theology may be, the situation of ministers in relation to their churches is such that it can seem the most natural thing in the world to proceed on the assumption that the primary function of churches as institutions is to maintain their ministers, not only in the financial sense but in the more pervasive sense of providing a milieu in which ministers can freely exercise their gifts....In such a situation, the success or failure of a church is not estimated according to its ability to discern and obey the will of God for its life in its own place but by the capacity of the minister to attract admirers.[684]

In such a scenario, institutional health comes to be defined

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[682]Ministry, p. 148.

[683]Issues Facing Christians Today (Basingstoke: Marshalls, 1984).

[684]The Protestant Ministry (London: Faber & Faber, 1958), p. 37.

as a church's ability to call and keep a "prince of the pulpit." The people then become beholden to the minister, and the minister, in turn, becomes beholden to pleasing the people, in order to guarantee that they will continue to turn out in sufficient numbers to provide a measure of the ministry's success.

Rather than pursuing the chimera of personal and institutional success (as the world defines "success"), the servant minister is very much aware that the church's true home is not of this world, and that the vocation of the people of God is to be pilgrims. The servant minister understands that the pilgrim people's temporary rest stops may never become their permanent home, and for that reason the minister is always out ahead of the people, scouting the way through difficult terrain.[685]

In a famous passage from the Church Dogmatics, Barth reminds the church always to be on the guard against preoccupation with institutional priorities, at the expense of the gospel:

> As an apostolic Church the Church can never in any respect be an end in itself....As His community it points beyond itself....In its deepest and most proper tendency it is not churchly, but worldly -- the Church with open doors and great windows, behind which it does better not to close itself in upon itself again by putting in pious stained-glass windows. It is holy in its openness to the street and even the alley, in its turning to the

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[685]If God's people are like an army on the move, then Robert Paul provides an alternate image of the minister's role: that of army cook: "bringing the bread of life to God's people on the march" -- Ministry, p. 60. Of this humble image, Paul writes, "We do not regard the figure of the Minister as army cook or quartermaster as one likely to excite the red corpuscles of promising students, but perhaps we should remind those who hanker after the front line that in these days of offensive-in-depth the commissariat and supply center are likely to be among the first strategic targets of the enemy" (p. 66).

> profanity of human life -- the holiness which, according to Romans 12:5, does not scorn to rejoice with them that do rejoice and to weep with them that weep. Its mission is not additional to its being. It is, as it is sent and active in its mission. It builds itself up for the sake of its mission and in relation to it.[686]

The fifth obstacle to servant ministry is thoughtless traditionalism. "I am about to do a new thing," says the Lord (Isa. 43:19); yet to some church members, a "new thing" would seem to be the worst of disasters. Much has been made of the rapid pace of change in contemporary society, and in particular of the generational differences between those who have memories of the Great Depression and Second World War and those who were nurtured in the lap of postwar prosperity. In order to serve the younger generations, effective ministry must lead the people to become less enamored of "that old-time religion," and to become more open to new ways of responding to the needs of the whole community.

The obstacles to servant ministry are formidable; yet, as Daniel Jenkins asserts, the church forgets this essential character of ministry only at the peril of losing its distinctive calling to become the self-sacrificing community Christ calls it to be:

> It is clear from Scripture that the ministry of the church is, like that of its Lord, in the form of a servant and that it loses its meaning whenever that is forgotten. The authority within the community is based solely on service....Thus the community wanted by Christ exists out of plain love. The office in it is nothing but the working out of this love. It has no other authority but the appeal that its service is uniform with Christ's service....The ministry of the apostles is never conceived of as a thing in itself but always in dependence upon, and as the expression of, the ministry

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[686]Church Dogmatics IV/1, pp. 724-725.

of Jesus Christ.[687]

The scandalous example of Jesus Christ as servant goes far beyond that of merely waiting at tables; through his sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus models the role of a suffering servant. In The Crucified God, Jürgen Moltmann portrays the radical nature of Christian discipleship -- and, by implication, of the particular discipleship known as ministry:

> Jesus was folly to the wise, a scandal to the devout and a disturber of the peace in the eyes of the mighty. That is why he was crucified. If anyone identifies with him, this world is "crucified" to him, as Paul said. He becomes alienated from the wisdom, religion and power politics of his society. The crucified Christ became the brother of the despised, abandoned and oppressed. And this is why brotherhood with "the least of his brethren" is a necessary part of brotherhood with Christ and identification with him.[688]

Servant ministry in the way of Christ has, in Moltmann's view, a political dimension:

> ...the Christ of the poor has always been the crucified Christ. What do they themselves see in him? They clearly do not find in his passion another "poor devil" who had no better luck than they. Rather, they find in him the brother who took off his divine form and took on the form of a slave (Phil. 2), to be with them and to love them. They find in him a God who does not torture them, as their masters do, but becomes their brother and companion.[689]

Diaconal ministry is political inasmuch as it is concerned, in Christian love, with the situation of those who suffer, but it is not political in and of itself. Much has been written by

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[687]The Gift of Ministry (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), pp. 23-24.

[688]The Crucified God (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 24.

[689]The Crucified God, p. 49.

contemporary liberation theologians about Jesus' preferential regard for the poor; while this is an arresting homiletical concept, it is not entirely accurate. Jesus in his ministry demonstrates no preference for one class of person over another; he speaks to the rich and powerful Pharisee Nicodemus, as well as to the outcast woman at the well. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that Jesus defies society's tendency to show preference to the rich and powerful, instead showing preference to no one -- or, better, to everyone (as absurd as that concept may sound).[690]

Furthermore, servant ministry in the way of Christ has an eschatological dimension. Jesus, as we have seen, demonstrates no interest in forming an earthly institution; his band of disciples travel so light that they carry not even a change of clothes (Matt. 10:10; Lk. 9:3). The one time Jesus mentions the word ekklesia, or church, is in a context that makes it doubtful that the word originated with him; rather, the attribution of this word to Jesus seems to have been an effort by the later church to give dominical sanction to the institution of Petrine supremacy.[691] The urgency of the imminent parousia keeps all leadership structures in the early Christian community lean and spare; like the Bedouin's tent, the leadership structures of the Christian community must be capable of being broken down at a moment's notice, and moved to a

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[690]This is consistent with what we have seen, in Chapter One, of Richard Collins' thesis in Diakonia.

[691]"You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church," Matt. 16:18. See Ulrich Luz, "The Primacy Text (Mt. 16:18)," in the Princeton Seminary Bulletin, vol. XII no. 1, 1991, pp. 41-55.

new location to fit the requirements of mission.

Unlike the followers of other first-century rabbis, Moltmann points out,

> the disciples of Jesus did not request to be accepted into his "school," but were called by him....His disciples did not follow him in order to become rabbis themselves one day. They were to call each other brother, rather than rabbi (Matt. 10:24). For Jesus did not found a new rabbinical school, but proclaimed the imminence of the kingdom.[692]

CONCLUSION

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is presently at a crossroads with regard to its understanding of ordained ministry. Tremendous changes have rocked the church throughout the twentieth century, from the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early part of this century, to the seductive siren-song of civil religion in the post-war years, to the societal and ethical turmoil of the 1960s, to the present confusion regarding the church's -- and the ministry's -- role in an era of diminishing resources and moral relativism. Among the most credible of the many voices that are calling for renewal in these days are those calling for renewal of the church's ministry, through the re-discovery of servanthood as the fundamental biblical paradigm for ministry.

It has been my intention in this paper to explore and develop that paradigm, applying it to the situation of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in these final years of the twentieth century. It is my hope and prayer that this work may be useful to the church, as we continue to rediscover -- as indeed we must do in every

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[692]The Crucified God, pp. 54-55.

generation -- what it means to be ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda.

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